


ST. CLARE  
AND HER ORDER









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## ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER



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ST. CLARE.  
(Tiberio D'Assisi.)



# ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER

A STORY OF SEVEN CENTURIES

EDITED BY  
THE AUTHOR OF "THE ENCLOSED NUN"

ILLUSTRATED

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## NOTE

THANKS are due to Mr. Gellatly for permission to reproduce the hitherto unpublished portraits of St. Francis and St. Clare. Thanks are also due to various Abbesses for illustrations, and for information, and the loan of books. To the sisters and others who have translated and worked on this compilation, we wish the blessing of St. Clare.



# ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

JUST seven hundred years ago, on the 19th of March, 1212, Chiara Scifi, a young Italian girl living in the little town of Assisi, ran away from home and entered on a life of poverty, penance and prayer—a life which is the negation of all ordinary human desires. She persevered in that life for over forty years, and princesses and peasants alike joined her in it. Thousands of women continued all down the ages to embrace this extraordinary life; there are over ten thousand still living it in this twentieth century.

It is not only a life of poverty, chastity and obedience—it is a life of absolute seclusion from the world; for the Poor Clare never leaves her cloister, never shows her face to seculars again. It is a life of perpetual fasting; the Poor Clare has only one meal a day, except on Sundays, and she never eats meat. It is a life of constant mortification of the body—the Poor Clare wears harsh, clumsy clothing, goes ever barefoot, scourges herself constantly.

"Oh! what is the use of it all?" asks the worldling. Why not go on committees instead of praying? Why not modify the coarse and cumbersome dress? Why not change the perpetual fasting for a moderate diet suited to the climate?—and so on, and so on. That life behind

convent walls seems cruel and useless and miserable to many outside.

But there is this to be said ; that for those inside the life of the world appears still more cruel and useless and miserable. To play at power by discussing trifles on committee ; to modify your dress constantly at the orders of your dressmaker ; to change your diet constantly at the orders of your doctor—where is freedom and opportunity for the inner life if the mind is thus continually nagged by worldly details ?

And from an impartial point of view there is as much hardship and absurdity in going with bare arms to dance at midnight, as in going with bare feet to prayer at midnight.

Surely even to the most worldly there come times when the restless life of society seems some mad dream—too cruel to be true. That there should be corners in wheat and deaths from starvation ; that hundreds of infants should be born only to die ; that an earthquake should swallow up just and unjust alike : these conundrums must come before us all sometimes, and where for the worldling is the answer ?

A recent writer, who was thrown into prison by our social system and given time to think, wrote as follows : “ I am conscious now that behind all this beauty there is some spirit hidden of which the painted forms and shapes are but modes and manifestations, and it is with this spirit that I desire to become in harmony. I have grown tired of articulate utterances of men and things.”

And a modern poet says—

“ Strange the world about me lies,  
Never yet familiar grown—  
Still disturbs me with surprise,  
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,  
Floored with gem-like plains and seas,  
Shall I never feel at home,  
Never wholly feel at ease ? ”



Poets and philosophers and the religious have always had this feeling of the unreality of earthly things; of the reality of spiritual things. There will always be some to whom chairs and tables and trees and gems are not real, and to whom heaven and the angels and the saints and God are real. And one must live according to one's belief—must enter the path to which one is called. We shall hear later on of a nun who always kissed the walls of her cell when she entered—so dear to her was her "imprisonment"; we shall hear of another who was devoured with a thirst for suffering. These things may help us to understand the world-strangeness of the Poor Clare.

And it is the spiritual kingdoms that are real enough to remain. Look back at the age of the great Emperor and Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, who persecuted the humble Christian sect. Read his meditations—so reasonable, so true, so excellent; see his firm and wise founding of the Roman empire. Look at the handful of semi-barbarians who at the same time were worshipping in the catacombs, their rude ritual, their primitive wall-paintings, their illogical cult. Which would the worldly man say would last—the philosophy and empire of Marcus Aurelius, or the philosophy and temples of the Christians? Certainly all material power and earthly knowledge was with that Emperor—but it is the gaudy churches of the Christians that fill Rome to-day, it is the philosophy of the Christians that spreads all over the world—only repressed in one spot to burst out more hotly in another.

It is an extraordinary phenomenon: is it nothing more? The key lies in the fact that Marcus Aurelius did not appeal to the soul, only to the intellect. If the intellect were supreme, then would Aurelius have conquered; but since the soul exists—in spite of the materialist—it is the Galilean who has conquered.

Nearly every convent of Poor Clares has certain small

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regulations and wayspeculiar to itself, but the following orarium may be taken as typical.

- 5 a.m. Rise. Way of the Cross and meditation.
- 6.0. Prime and Tierce.
- 6.30. Litany (Postulants and novices and externs do their cells). Sick have cup of tea.
- 7.0. Mass. Communion. Thanksgiving.
- 8.0. Frustulum—a mug of tea and piece of dry bread, eaten standing.
- 8.30. Choir nuns do their cells; others wash up, etc.
- 9.0. Sext and nones.
- 9.30. Occupations—or ordered duties, such as care of the Sanctuary, etc.
- 11.30. Assembly in choir; silent prayer; to refectory in procession.
- 11.45. Dinner; a typical meal is given as consisting of potatoes with onion sauce, followed by milk pudding and stewed fruit. During the meal there is reading, the book being handed round and each nun reading a chapter. The book is generally the *Lives of Saints*. Back to choir in procession for grace or prayer.
- 12.30. Half-hour of free time.
- 1 p.m. "Obediences" or "occupations."
- 2.30. Vespers. Office of the Dead.
- 3.0. Obediences.
- 5 to 6. Meditation in choir.
- 6.0. Collation; consisting of tea or cocoa and dry bread. On Feasts there is butter or jam.
- 6.30. Compline. Night prayers.
- 7.30. Silent bell. Nuns go to their cells, each taking up a can of water to wash with. They sleep on a sloping wooden couch, with one square hard pillow: they never lie flat down. The nuns sleep in their habit; the novices sleep in tunic, with kerchief and wimple of cotton (the day ones are of linen).

11.50. Rise.

12 midnight. Matins, followed by Litany and prayers, and, for the professed, an hour's meditation.

2.0 p.m. Return to cells for sleep.

Twice a week there is a brief "recreation," when conversation is allowed.

There, for the materialist, is the whole story of the life of a Poor Clare. Day in, day out, for year after year, she observes some such time-table, with a rare break and feast when there happens to be a jubilee. Also there is ever the chance that any day soldiers or police may appear, and (dangerous creature that she is!) throw her forth penniless on the world, without giving her rhyme or reason for this arbitrary taking possession of a peaceful people's home! This is going on in France and Italy to-day; on the 10th of October, 1911, the Poor Clares of Nantes were suddenly expelled from their convent; in December 1909 the nuns of St. Cosimata in Rome were told that they must turn out of their ancient home.

But persecutions only lead to perseverance and persistence in these holy women, and they move patiently into some other spot and wait till they be recalled. What was it Tennyson wrote of the Parisians?—

"Why change the titles of your streets!  
You fools: you'll want them all again."

And it has always so far happened that the country that expelled the Poor Clares has in a few years begged them to return.

That the nun is little better than a prisoner, and is ever craving to return to the world, and that her privations and austerities make her miserable, is the theory held by many outsiders. If only they could hear the laughter when the Clares play games on Christmas Day! There is no such excellent preparation for a feast and for fun, than the fasting and silence of Advent.



Or how about the story of the Jubilee of Charitas, Abbess of Nuremburg, in 1529? Sister Catherine, her niece, writes to her father a joyful account of it: "We conducted the Rev. Mother to the refectory, and because of the occasion she allowed all the sisters to sing as much as they pleased. Our friends had not been mean, but had furnished us with good wine, and the Rev. Mother gave a generous helping to all. Towards evening we all danced, and Mother Apollonia Fucherin, who has been here fifty-seven years, danced with me, and in the most sprightly manner too!"

If outsiders are to be shocked, it is better they should hold up hands of horror over this innocent gaiety on a great occasion than over that daily routine of prayer and fasting which covers the spiritual life of the sisters, and which is too holy to be dwelt on here.

But it must never be forgotten that the spiritual life is not devoid of adventures and romances. Here is a little story that begins in Bruges and ends in London.

Sister Margaret was a young religious at Bruges, who was noted for her equitable and cheerful temper, and great affection and charity. She had had difficulty in persuading her father to let her enter the convent: he would give his consent, and then when the day of parting came near, withdraw it again. But at last Sister Margaret's cheerful patience was rewarded, and she found her soul's desire. Her own difficulties in following her vocation made her very sympathetic to others; especially she prayed for a young man of noble family who desired to become a Jesuit, but could not gain his parents' consent. On the vigil of St. Joseph 1842 Mother Mary Dominic specially asked the community to once more make earnest prayer for this young man, and Sister Margaret, striking the table with her hand, cried—

"We will pray so fervently to-night, we will carry heaven by assault!"

And truly she chanted the office with an extraordinary



fervour, and passed the whole hour of meditation in a very *furor* of prayer. After the meditation, she passed swiftly upstairs in advance of the others and went to her couch. Suddenly her sisters heard a cry. They went to the cell; Sister Margaret was dead.

Sister Mary Joseph, a religious noted for holiness and simplicity, returned sadly to the choir for her hour of watching. She wept for the young nun who had passed away without the last sacraments; she was bewildered, and sought indulgences by prayer for the soul of Sister Margaret. As she prayed she had a sweet brief vision of a radiant Madonna leading the soul of Margaret on high. Sister Mary Joseph was filled with joy; but doubts supervened. Had she seen a reality? Had she possibly been deceived by a dream? Humbly she implored our Lord to give her some sign that the vision was real. But none came. Her time for prayer was passing; she could only plead once more—

“Obedience calls me from here, O God, I must go; and will you leave me in this bitter doubt?”

There was no answer; she rose, and obedient to her rule she left the choir. Directly she stepped without she suddenly saw the whole cloister illuminated with a brilliant, unnatural light—brighter even than mid-day; it lasted several seconds, so that she could not be deceived; then the black night fell down once more. Oh, how she blessed God! How full of supreme joy was that humble sister's heart! The great God had stooped to relieve her little fears! The very next day the young noble came to say that all difficulties had suddenly faded from his path; his parents had become amenable; he was even then on his way to enter the noviciate. He attributed this entirely to the prayers of nuns, especially to those of Sister Margaret.

And do you doubt that the nuns were fully assured that Sister Margaret had gained this grace at the cost of her own life? Put it quite materially, if you like, and call

it heart disease following on religious excitement and the swift mounting of the stairs. It is none the less true that her life was given for another, that she followed her high adventure to the death, even like any knight of old.

Sister Mary Joseph was sent later to London as vicaress, and here also she could feel herself very near our Lord. She had often prayed that her soul might be purified by earthly suffering, so that after death she should not be long deprived of the Beatific Vision. God granted her request; she was struck with a slow and painful illness. At last, in 1872, on Holy Thursday, she seemed scarcely able to draw another breath.

"Mother Vicaress, I think the good Lord will come and fetch you to-day," said the abbess.

"Oh no, Mother Abbess," she replied, "not till Saturday."

And in truth her agony was drawn out till then.

At the moment of her death all of the community were gathered round her, and they suddenly saw her transfigured. She raised her eyes towards the head of her bed with an air of joyous surprise impossible to describe, as though she saw some ravishing vision, and at the same time she gave up her soul to God, saying—

"Venez, Marie, Venez!"

Those who were present at the scene say they can never forget that transport of joy, which seemed suddenly to obliterate from her face all the traces of her past terrible sufferings.

There is a little book, *The Contemplative Life*, written by a Carthusian monk, and published by the Angelus Co., of Norwood, which describes the life of the Trappists, Poor Clares and others, and which makes clear the sweetness and satisfaction of the life of the cloister. It scarcely seems worth while to quote it here, however, for we hope that those who read the following pages will easily be convinced that there is no freedom that exceeds the free-

dom of the cloister, no joy that exceeds the ecstasy of prayer, no love more fervid—more supreme—than the Poor Clares' love of Jesus Christ.

But to turn to more worldly things, and try and give an outline of the numerical history of the Order.

In Holzapfel's *Handbook of the Franciscan Orders*, it is stated that there were seventy convents of Poor Ladies about the time of the death of St. Clare, the number of inmates varying from twenty to one hundred. The Order had already taken firm root in Spain, France and Germany, and in the next decade it spread all over Europe, even to Cyprus and Palestine. In 1384 there were 404 convents, of which 251 were in Italy. At the end of the fourteenth century there were about 15,000 Clares.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century many complaints were made of the laxity in the life of the Order, and Innocent VII wished to make a reform. He altered particulars of the election of abbess, etc., but it was not till William of Casale was General that any great change was brought about, largely through the efforts of St. Colette. At the end of the fifteenth century there were Poor Clare Colettines in most of the large towns of France and Belgium. They were respected everywhere for the strictness of their life.

Few exact facts are known of the spread of the Order from the fifteenth century. We only know they increased in the European countries and spread to America—especially South America. In 1587, after the Reformation had destroyed many convents, there were still six hundred houses. Then the Order again grew, and seems in 1680 to have reached its highest point of 925 convents, enclosing 34,100 nuns. (It appears that some houses of strict tertiaries are included in this total.) The above were all under the General of the Order. If one can believe the chronicles of the time, there were 70,000 sisters, counting those under the bishops.



From the end of the seventeenth century the number of nuns decreased, though the number of convents still increased. The French Revolution and the later secularization destroyed the growth of the Order, except in Spain.

Still in the nineteenth century it recovered past all expectation; in 1907 there were 518 convents and 10,204 sisters. This is counting in the Conceptionist houses, of which there are in Spain 80, in South America 5 and in Belgium 3.

So far according to Holzapfel.

In 1895 Mgr. Ricard published at Paris a life of St. Clare in which he gave, so far as he could ascertain, a list of all the monasteries of Poor Clares throughout the world. On the 1st of January, 1894, according to this list, there were then in Spain over 100 convents, Italy 83, France 47, Belgium 29, England 7, Ireland 7, United States 4, Germany 4, Austria 2, Syria 2, Philippines 1, Canaries 1, Portugal 1—giving a total of 288 monasteries enumerated by name. The list is obviously incomplete, but it is more detailed than Holzapfel.

So far as we have been able to ascertain the state of affairs on the 1st of January, 1912, there were in BELGIUM 33 convents: *Malonne* near Namur, *Mons*, *Quiétrain*, *Arlon*, *Wavre*, *Renaix*, *Lambermont*, *Hasselb*, and *Boon* near Antwerp, which do not appear on Mgr. Ricard's list. Many of these are French foundations of exiled Clares. The older convents are *Ghent*, *Bruges*, *Brussels*, *Louvain*, *Antwerp*, *Lierre*, *Malines*, *Turnhout*, *Courtray*, *Newport*, *Ostend*, *Roulers*, *Ypres*, *Alost*, *Ecloo*, *Grammont*, *Lokeren*, *St. Nicholas*, *Termonde*, *Beaumont*, *Enghien*, *Tournai*, *Tongres*, and *St. Trond*.

In France, we, of course, have to mark a decrease, with great astonishment that so many of the Poor Clares still manage to remain at their posts of prayer. Even in the heart of Paris, in the Impasse de Saxe, they still pursue their tranquil lives, though the Carmelites and other Orders who used to be their neighbours have gone. It



is the power of poverty—the freedom from possessions. It is scarcely worth while to turn out Poor Clares, who have no gold or silver candlesticks! The 1912 list gives 31 French convents against 47 in the 1904 list. These 31 are: *Béziers, Besançon, Perpignon, Millau, Gourdon, St. Omer, Azille, Poligny, Le Puy, Amiens, Arras, Grenoble, Paris, Péronne, Cambrai, Montbrison, Alençon, Lyon, Bastia (Corsica), Romans, Lacour, Valence, Crest, Mur-de-Barrez, Orthez, Lourdes, Paray-le-Monial, Rennes, Vals-les-Bains, Mazamet, and Mentone*. The following are the fourteen names of those that are on Mgr. Ricard's list, and which have been suppressed or have removed: *Bordeaux, Pérégueux, Marseilles, Aurillac, Nantes, Lille, Toulouse, Roubaix, Evian-les-Bains, Aiz, Lorgues, Versailles, Chateauroux, and Lanouvelle*.

Mgr. Ricard's list for ENGLAND gives 7 names; to which we have now to add 3 in England and 1 in Scotland, making a total of 11. Curiously enough all the later foundations are at places beginning with L!—Liberton (near Edinburgh), Liverpool, Lynton and Lutterworth.

To the 7 names in IRELAND given by Mgr. Ricard, we have to add Carlow and Donnybrook: making a total of 9.

IN NORTH AMERICA we have to add the names of Boston and Evansville, making 6 for the United States; and Valleyfield and one other in Canada, mounting up to a total of 8.

From other countries we have been unable to get exact figures—the Poor Clares shun publicity—so that those given must be taken as approximate. The Order is numerous in Spain (though the Government has confiscated some convents) and South America; decreases slowly in Austria and Italy; lingers in Germany, and is expelled (for the moment) from Portugal. It has ever been thus with the Order—constant fluctuations. It is most interesting to watch its growth in the new countries like the United States.

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However obvious it may be that it is not desirable for large numbers to enter contemplative Orders, it is equally obvious that there ever has been, and ever will be, a small number who can in that life alone find happiness and outlet for their spiritual energies.

### NUMERICAL POSITION OF THE ORDER, JAN. 1, 1912.

COUNTRY	No. OF HOUSES	No. OF INMATES
England . . . . .	9	228
Scotland . . . . .	1	14
Ireland . . . . .	9	277
United States . . . . .	6	173
Canada . . . . .	2	34
France . . . . .	31	742
Belgium . . . . .	33	851
Spain . . . . .	247	5500 (about)
Peru . . . . .	1	34 "
Mexico . . . . .	14	200 "
Ecuador . . . . .	5	150 "
Bolivia . . . . .	1	20 "
Columbia . . . . .	5	136 "
Germany . . . . .	4	140 "
Austria . . . . .	4	150 "
Palestine . . . . .	2	54 "
Dalmatia . . . . .	1	15 "
Italy . . . . .	109	1800 "
Holland . . . . .	4	112 "
	488	10,630

(Allowing for differences as to inclusion of Conceptionists, etc., it is possible to safely state that the Order numbers about 500 houses, with about 10,500 inmates.)





ST. CLARE.  
(Simone Memmi.)



## CHAPTER II

### LIFE OF ST. CLARE

CLARE was born in Assisi, 16th of July, 1194. Her native city, though a small town, was one of the most ancient in Umbria, and it probably preserves to-day much the same aspect it had in the thirteenth century. It is because these small, walled-in towns have changed so little, and because the ideal of St. Francis and St. Clare has been kept intact by their followers, that we are able to this day to picture so clearly to ourselves the bright and beautiful story of Clare. Prof. W. E. Collins, when presiding at the first general meeting of the International Society of Franciscan Studies, said: "There is more contemporary, or nearly contemporary, literature about St. Francis than about any other man of the Middle Ages, unless it be Becket." And all this literature deals also with Clare, whose life and mission were worked out in union with St. Francis; and we can read her letters and her rule, go and see the dormitory where she slept and the garden she tended, and put to scorn those niggling quibblers who seek to throw doubts and detractions on every life which rises above the normal level.

Clare's ancestors were of noble descent: her mother, Ortolana, was of the house of Fiume, Counts of Sterpeto; and this family is still existing, and retains their hereditary castle near Petrignano. When in a library in Assisi in 1911 I picked up a life of "*La Beata Ortolana*," and found with interest it had been presented in 1904 by Conte a Fiume—the present representative of her family. These delightful links seem to hold us very near to Clare,

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so that these seven hundred years slip away, and one almost feels as though writing of a contemporary.

Ortolana married Count Favorino of Sassorosso—a castle on the slopes of Monte Subasio, near Assisi—and they had five children : Don Boso, Penenda, Clare, Agnes and Beatrix. They lived in a palace in Assisi, part of which can still be seen. Ortolana was of noted piety ; both Wadding and Joseph of Madrid state that she went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, no light undertaking in those days, and Thomas of Celano tells us that when in prayer shortly before Clare's birth she heard a voice saying to her : "Fear not, Ortolana ; thou shalt safely bring forth a light which shall enlighten the whole world clearly." It was because of the last word of the prophecy that Clare received her name—a name of which we have no previous example. She was baptized in the font at the cathedral of St. Rufino, where Francis had been baptized some twelve years previously—that font which can still be seen, and in which all the children of Assisi are still baptized.

The official biographer of St. Clare, Thomas of Celano, thus speaks of her early years—

"She learnt with docility the lessons her mother taught her. . . . Her hands were gladly opened to the poor, and out of the goods which abounded in her house she supplied the wants of many. . . . She loved the practice of prayer, and so often experienced its pleasant fragrance that little by little she attained to contemplation ; and in that she had no beads on which to count her prayers she used little heaps of stones, and thus made her devotions in orderly manner. . . . She wore a small hair shirt hidden under her robes, thus conforming to the world outwardly and to Christ inwardly. And when her family would that she should marry she would in nowise consent, desiring to devote her virginity to our Lord." And Loccatelli in his *Life* states : "Her purity was without blemish, and showed itself in her rare and imperturbable joyousness.

It was noticed that her only recreation was to gather flowers, weave ribands of chaplets, and otherwise adorn the images of the Blessed Virgin and of Jesus Christ." Obviously the tradition is of a gay and good child, trained by a devout mother, and growing steadily in grace. She must also have been in sympathy with her sisters, for the two younger ones, Agnes and Beatrice, later followed her into the cloister. The elder sister, Penenda, married, so did the only brother; but some of their children walked in Clare's footsteps, and we shall find the abbess receiving her nieces as novices.

And while Clare was growing up in girlhood, Francis was growing up in manhood. She must often have heard of him—probably often seen him, for they moved in the same rank of life. First she would hear of the gay young spark who spent too much of his father's money, who was often elected master of the revels by the other youths of the town, who eagerly joined in the war on Perugia; then she would hear that tale of helping the poor priest to build up his ruined church—of spending his father's money, not in rioting, but in almsgiving; and finally of that dramatic scene outside St. Rufino when the youth finally stripped himself of the very garments he wore, and forsook father and mother to follow Christ in evangelical poverty. It was enough to fire any girl's imagination. Here was no wearing of a hair shirt under a silk robe, no giving away of the crumbs from a rich table—but absolutely a following of Christ's command to forsake *all* and follow Him. Dressed in a rude garment of sackcloth tied round his waist with a rope, Francis was nursing lepers in the wretched huts on the plain below Assisi. And already other young men had joined him, including Rufino Scifi, a cousin of Clare's. When they came up into the town the small boys stoned them and jeered at them—the descendants of the same small boys still stone and deride in Assisi any one who does not conform to the customs of the day.



In the Lent of 1212—just seven hundred years ago—Francis was preaching in the church of San Giorgio. We all know those Lenten sermons in Italy—the chosen preacher, the great dim church, the crowds of standing men and sitting women; the gradual working up towards Holy Week, and the marvellous representation of the Passion. Clare attended those sermons, and wept. Aided by her aunt, Bianca Guelfucci, Clare had audience with Francis, and told him of her spiritual aspirations, of her desire to embrace the life of poverty and prayer, to forsake all for Christ. Francis desired to put her to the proof, and bade her beg for bread from door to door at Assisi. Dressed as a mendicant, Clare fulfilled this order—she was even then of the brave and persistent race of those who not only aspire but obtain. All through her life she showed the same calm courage and persistence; she was not to be daunted or turned aside.

When, in 1207, Francis was helping to build the little wayside church of St. Damiano—half-way between the leper huts and Assisi—he had called out to the passers-by: "Come and help me, for here you shall see flourish a convent of poor ladies, whose holy life and reputation shall redound to the credit of our Heavenly Father and the kingdom of Christ." This prediction probably came back to him; certainly he accepted Clare as his disciple in the life of poverty and Gospel simplicity, and arranged for her to come to the Portiuncula on the night of Palm Sunday, and there take the vows. It has been so in the material as well as in the spiritual life, that the man and the woman were needed for the development of the ideal. Witness Pericles and Aspasia, Augustine and Monica, Socrates and Diotima, Jerome and Paula, Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare.

And yet Canon Knox Little has written a life of Francis in which he never even mentions Clare!

Clare was now eighteen years of age—which is not young in Italy—and doubtless the question of her mar-



riage was being pressed upon her. Her father was a man of arms, and his brothers, Monaldo and Paolo, we are told, had a "warlike spirit." Umbria was torn by internal conflicts and strife, and religion was only just recovering from the degradations of the twelfth century. Turn to Hallam or Ranke, to Froude or Dom Gasquet, they all admit that the papacy before the election of Innocent III in 1198 had fallen into a very bad way. "By the acquisition and, in some respects, the enjoyment of immense riches, the ancient monastic orders had forfeited much of the public esteem," says Hallam; and Fleury says that this great wealth was the cause of much relaxation of discipline. To this worldly period belonged Count Favorino. But let us hear the historians as to the period to which Francis and Clare belonged:—"The noonday of papal dominion extends from the pontificate of Innocent III inclusively to that of Boniface VIII. . . . The institution of the mendicant orders, amongst other circumstances, principally contributed to the aggrandizement of Rome," states Hallam. "These new preachers were received with astonishing approbation by the laity, whose religious zeal usually depends a good deal upon their opinion of the sincerity and disinterestedness of their pastors."

So there stood Clare between these two spirits: Count Favorino, her father, ambitious, wealthy and warlike, and of the world; a man of about fifty, and one by no means to be lightly thwarted. On the other side was Francis, aged about thirty, who for three years had been under vows, who had renounced the world and wealth for the folly of the Cross. We know from his Rule what portions of the Gospel Francis put foremost, what words would be ringing in the ears of Clare: "If thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me." "If any man come to Me and leave not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters,

yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." "And call no man your father on earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven." "I come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother."

Palm Sunday on that year 1212 fell on the 18th of March, a date ever dear to the Poor Clares down these seven hundred years. It is one of the feasts of Holy Church most travellers have seen in Italy : have seen the sheaves of grey olive boughs carried into the church ; have seen the Lenten mourning put aside for the day, whilst the palms are waved and the Church cries : "Hosanna to the Son of David !"

Clare was at Mass at the cathedral with her family, "adorned and resplendent amongst the other ladies. And it happened, as it were a noteworthy presage, that when the rest went forward to receive their palms that Clare stayed silent and absorbed in her place. Whereupon the Bishop came down to her and put the palm in her hand." She had need of prayer in the impasse in which she found herself ; and *the* palm was only to be hers after forty years of striving. But she was no creature of doubt and hesitation ; how could she doubt the Gospel story of Christ, when here in Assisi was Francis literally living the Gospel life—taking no thought for the morrow, and blessing those that cursed ? It would be easy to believe in Christ if we could see Christians living the Christ life.

Like the early disciples, Clare had heard the call, "Come, follow Me," and like them she left all and followed.

Shortly after midnight, with her aunt as companion, she made her way down a back staircase and out through a disused door ; through the unlit streets, under the great arched gateway in the city walls, and then across two miles of olive groves she fled that chill spring night. This was the second test of Clare's courage ; think of it, ye modern women, who are so proud of your little deeds of to-day.





ST. FRANCIS  
(Tiberio D'Assisi.)



When, on the 19th of March, 1911, we would have passed the same way before the dawn, in order to try and taste of Clare's fears and strength, we found the path impassable on account of swollen streams.

At the little church of the Portiuncula down on the plain Clare was expected. After saying the midnight office the brothers, with Francis at their head, went forth to meet her, and escorted her into that humble sanctuary which is the cradle of the Franciscan Order.

There Clare knelt and divested herself of her worldly robe, to put on a sack-like garment tied round the waist with rope; and there Francis cut off her beautiful hair and threw a black, obliterating veil over the shorn head. Chiara Scifi was dead to the world.

Francis knew it was necessary to place Clare at once in a place of safety, so he and his companions took her to the St. Paolo convent of Benedictine nuns, about two miles off on the plain. The remains of this little walled-in cloister with its avenue of cypresses yet exist, but it is deserted and forgotten. Here, on Holy Monday, her relations traced and followed her, and tried by threats and arguments to secure her return. Clare was firm; the vows were taken, she could not turn back. At last Count Favorino got angry and tried to use force; Clare clung on to the altar with one hand, whilst with the other she threw back her veil and showed her shorn head. With groans and tears her relations turned and went.

Holy Week passed, and then the attacks began again; it is said that at this time Clare told her mother not to weep, for she should certainly die in her daughter's arms—a prophecy that came true, for Ortolana, when a widow, joined the Poor Clares, and died at St. Damiano seven months before Clare. But these scenes did not conduce to the spiritual calm of either Clare or the nuns, her hostesses; so one day Francis and the elderly Fra Bernardo, lately a magistrate and man of dignity and wealth in Assisi, came and fetched Clare away to a lonely little

convent on the side of Mount Subasio called St. Angelo in Panso.

Clare had left behind her her younger sister, Agnes, aged fourteen, whom she loved devotedly, and with whom she had grown up in sympathy and affection. Probably she had felt scruples about telling Agnes of her intended flight and vows; but now she had no scruples in praying God that Agnes should taste of the sweetness of the cloister and forsake the world, as she had done. And a fortnight after Clare had entered the convent of St. Angelo Agnes announced to her parents that she was going forth to join her sister, and should not return to the paternal roof. The anger of Count Favorino was rekindled, and a family council was hastily summoned. The citizens of Assisi must indeed have been astonished: what madness was it that was leading young women and old men alike to forsake their noble palaces and beautiful town for the mud huts on the plains? What was going to be the end of the movement inaugurated by that wild son of Bernardone's?

While the family talked Agnes fled, and Clare received her and led her to the altar, and with loving words offered her to the Lord. Close on her footsteps came her uncle, Count Monaldo, and twelve men of arms; he was a fierce and resolute man, and to him had the family entrusted the enterprise of rescuing Agnes. Strange, this gentle young girl showed herself as inflexible as Clare had done; she attended to neither threats nor entreaties, and at last the warrior's rage blazed forth, and he commanded his soldiers to seize her and bring her along by force. They dragged and pushed their victim down the mountain path with such violence that the rocks and stones were marked with a line of blood, and Agnes, in her agony, cried: "Clare, help me! Help me, my sister, that I be not taken away from Jesus."

Torn by these cries, Clare raised her eyes to heaven and prayed for succour—and again her prayers were heard,

for the body of Agnes became so heavy in the arms of these soldiers that they could not lift her. They called some peasants who were tending the vines to come and help them, but neither could they move that frail body. "She must have fed on lead!" cried one of them. Then Count Monaldo raised his sword to strike the girl, but a sudden pain shot through his arm, leaving it powerless, and his sword dropped to the ground. The terrified soldiers fled, and Clare, running down, raised and embraced her sister, and led her back within the convent to give thanks to God. A few days later Francis came with some of his companions, and gave Agnes the habit and received her vows. So far Clare had been accepting the hospitality of the Benedictine nuns, but the central idea of Francis's mission was to go back to Gospel simplicity—especially to return to the absolute freedom from personal possessions of the first Apostles; and this was not possible under the elaborate and stately Benedictine rule of the most learned Order of the Church. It was absolutely necessary that those women who desired to follow the Franciscan ideal should have a cloister of their own; so Francis placed Clare and Agnes at the little hermitage of St. Damiano, and there other of the noble damsels of Assisi soon joined them, and there Clare lived till her death.

San Damiano! Birthplace of the Order of Poor Clares and shrine of saints. Little grey sanctuary set among the olives below the walls of Assisi—one of the most prayer-compelling, most wondrous spots on earth! For time seems to have passed unheeded over its lowly walls, and there can still be seen the refectory and dormitory and choir as they were in the time of St. Clare, and there you can see her breviary written for her by Fra Leo, and there you can hear the very bell she used to ring to summon the sisters to prayers.

Wadding says that the Benedictines who gave St. Francis the Portiuncula also gave him St. Damiano; but



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the Little Brothers who now dwell there are very decisively against this. They have been diving into the records of Assisi, and assert that the hermitage in the thirteenth century certainly was a dependence of the canons of the cathedral. The point is only interesting as showing greater acknowledgment of the Franciscan movement, if the grant came from the church dignitaries of the town. It is also interesting to find the present friars not only so full of loving care of St. Damiano and all its precious relics, but so keen as to its past history and anxious for accuracy.

Here, then, Clare entered on her life of penance and of prayer; Francis gave her as her rule and as his most precious gift the privilege of poverty; the sisters never had any money, and they had only such food as the friars begged for them and brought to them. It is said that Count Favorino became reconciled to his daughters and gave them their dowries, but they at once gave the money away to the poor: "That being entirely disburdened of earthly things they might run the more lightly after Jesus Christ."

Probably for the first three years, until Clare was made to assume the position of abbess, there was close connection with the Brothers Minor, and aid in their work in nursing the lepers and caring for the sick. The question of the enclosure of the Poor Clares is a very thorny one; it is an absolutely definite rule now, and the Poor Clares themselves are the most strenuous upholders of it; but when a writer like Father Paschal Robinson refuses the story in the *Fioretti* of St. Clare going to supper at the Portiuncula for the last time with St. Francis, because, apparently, he is afraid to acknowledge that Clare was not always strictly enclosed, the need for courage rather than caution is obvious. Why accept other stories of the *Fioretti*, and not this one? We shall come across many stories showing how Francis turned to Clare for help and advice, and how close and beautiful was their spiritual



friendship, so that Clare is spoken of as "the chief rival of the Blessed Francis in the observance of Gospel perfection." It is with reference to the diverse merits of the active and the contemplative life that one of these stories is told in Bonaventura's *Life of St. Francis*. The saint was in doubt as to whether his call was to preaching or prayer; the need of mission work seemed great, yet was he ever a lover of seclusion and meditation. And after he had pondered for many days he called two of the brothers and bade them go and put the question before Brother Sylvester, then in retreat at the Carceri, and before the virgin Clare, and ask them to pray for light and leading, and announce their decision. And the priest and the virgin were marvellously in agreement in their answers, for the Holy Spirit revealed to each that it was the Divine will that the saint should go forth and preach. So Francis rose and girded himself, and without delay set forth on his journey.

The following passage from the Clares' own history of their Order shows how they view this question of the secluded life: "The Clares were the first religious described by the special name of 'Enclosed' or 'Recluses.' It is the title by which they were honoured in nearly all the apostolic letters of Gregory IX and of Innocent IV."

And here is a legendary story of these early days told in *Homes of the First Franciscans*, but also told to the present writer by a smiling Brown Brother, who said it need not be believed. Francis and Clare walked together one winter's day in 1215 to Spello, a little town some seven or eight miles from Assisi in the Spoletan valley, where the Camaldulense nuns of the Vallegloria convent desired to come under the Franciscan rule. They went into the inn for food, and mine host was an evil-minded man, who grumbled away that it was scandalous for a man and woman to go tramping about the country together under cover of religion. It was a Friday, and, determined to

put his guests in the wrong, mine host placed a fat fowl on the table. Now, Francis had taken as part of his rule the Gospel verse : " Eat such things as are set before you " (Luke x. 8), and the law of the Church forbade meat on a Friday. So Francis made the sign of a cross over the fowl and it flew away, and a fish took its place, and mine host was converted. But Francis was sad that such things should be thought, and when they left Spello Francis bade Clare return by the upper path which runs along the hill-side, and he himself took the road along the valley. Now Clare had not heard the scandal and did not understand, and she called down to Francis to know when they should meet again. And Francis, in confusion, put her off with the phrase : " When the roses blow on Mount Subasio." And Clare went forward puzzled, but as she walked the snow melted before her feet, and behold ! briars were blooming in her pathway ; and joyfully she picked the flowers and put them in her robe, and gathered it up and ran down the hill-side to St. Francis, and showed him the roses. And he was convinced that pure-mindedness should triumph, and together they walked back to Assisi. Now this legend must have a wide range, for there are several pictures of St. Clare (*not* St. Elizabeth !) extant, where she is represented with her lap full of roses, whilst her bare feet are in the snow. And however unsupported it may be by evidence, it is proof that the tradition is of the working and walking together of Francis and Clare. And at least the Camaldulense nuns did become Poor Ladies in 1215—one of the first foundations of Clare.

Here is another account of these early days, and this time we have the authority of the Bishop Jacques de Vitry, in a letter still preserved in the library at Ghent. He was passing through Italy in 1216, and writes : " Here are men and women who have voluntarily stripped themselves of all earthly possessions, the better to serve God. The men are called Friars Minor. . . . The women dwell

in hospices in the environs of cities, and live in common on the fruit of their labour, but accept no money." This sounds like a fairly active life, though it is doubtful if the use of the word "hospice" really meant that the Clares "housed" the sick or travellers. We know that Francis used to send the sick to Clare, for we read in Celano's *Life*: "Blessed Francis sent to St. Clare a brother who was named Stephen, and who was possessed. And she made the sign of the cross over the brother, and bade him sleep a little in the spot where she usually prayed. And after a little he awoke sane and cured. A little boy of three years, called Mattiolo, had fixed a stone in his nostril so that no man could extract it. And Francis sent him to St. Clare, and as soon as she had made the sign of the cross he drew out the stone and was cured."

The strangeness would be if the life of this growing band of Poor Ladies had been stereotyped in those first years: they had no elaborate rules; they were sworn to obey Francis, and he, glad soul, would assuredly wish them to work and sing as well as to pray. There was much to be done: the poor churches the brothers were rebuilding and re-establishing needed altar-linen and vestments, and there were arrangements to be made for all the new novices who were arriving, and for those other convents at Severino, Florence and elsewhere which wished to come under the Franciscan rule of poverty.

Many of the other young girls of Assisi longed to imitate Clare and Agnes, and the richest and the noblest were most keen to come. Nor was it only girls who embraced the life of penance and mortification; many married couples separated, the men entering a monastery and the women a convent, and all dedicating themselves to God.

History makes mention of some of the nuns who joined Clare in the first years at St. Damiano. First, there was



her sister AGNES, whose reception we have described ; then her aunt, BIANCA GUELFUCCI, who had aided Clare's flight, and who became Sister Pacifica. She outlived St. Clare, and in 1253 we find her giving evidence of the sanctity of St. Clare at the canonical investigation ordered by Innocent IV. She spent two years at Spello, but died at St. Damiano, and her body was subsequently removed to St. Chiara.

AMATA CORNARO, Clare's niece, daughter of Penenda Scifi and Martino di Corano, a noble of Assisi. She was on the eve of marriage when, one day visiting St. Damiano to ask her aunt's prayers, she suddenly felt the call to the cloister. Her parents and fiancé were very angry, but Amata was decided and unbending, and the family had to give way before so decided a vocation. She also was one of the witnesses of the saintliness of Clare, in the year 1253. We are told that St. Clare specially loved Amata for her innocence and affectionate disposition.

AGNES OPERTULA, daughter of Bernardo of Assisi, was only a child when she joined St. Clare. The pretty story told by Wadding is that she was visiting St. Damiano with her mother one day, and leaving her mother's hand ran and clung to Clare's habit and refused to depart. She was left under Clare's influence, and in due time became a nun, and was granted the gift of contemplation. Once when a friar was preaching she heard the Divine voice whisper : "*In medio vestri sum.*" She moved, with other nuns, to San Giorgio in 1260, and died on the 1st of February of the following year.

FRANCESCA OF PERUGIA entered St. Damiano in 1213, and followed worthily in the footsteps of St. Clare. She died in 1238. To her belongs the beautiful phrase :— "*Aeternum sit amoris insanabili vulnus.*"

BALBINA (or Baluina) CORNARO, sister of Amata, and niece of Clare ; she was the first abbess of the Poor Clares at Vallegloria, Spello, where she lived a vigorous and



exemplary life. She died there on the 3rd of February, 1240.

BENEDETTA OF ASSISI entered St. Damiano in 1214 and after the death of Clare in 1253 she was elected abbess, a post she filled worthily till her death on the 12th of March, 1260.

CHIARA, great-niece of the saint; joined St. Damiano in 1220, and in 1232 went to Spain to make new foundations there.

BEATRICE, Clare's youngest sister, became a nun at the age of eighteen, and was noted for her spirit of prayer. She died in 1260. So that we have the saint's mother, Ortolana; her two sisters, Agnes and Beatrice; her three nieces, Amata, Balbina and Agnes; and her great-niece, Clare, all joining St. Damiano in St. Chiara's lifetime.

In all Clare had fifty companions in the year 1238, and Wadding gives the full list of their names, many of which also appear in the *Martirologio Franceseano*.

As the number of nuns increased, it became necessary to appoint an abbess, and by holy obedience Francis in 1215 made Clare assume this office. She felt this to be a heavy task and responsibility, but with quiet strength she shouldered the burden and bore it calmly for the rest of her days.

Thomas of Celano describes Clare at this period, and it is probable he saw her himself. He says: "Noble by birth, but still more noble by grace, she was of an angelic purity. She was yet young, but ripe before her time; fervent in the service of God, endowed with rare prudence and deepest humility; she was one of those great souls the human tongue cannot worthily praise." In all her pictures Clare is shown as tall and dignified, the forehead broad, the eyes almond, the chin small and firmly modelled. She dressed in "one poor tunic and a patched cloak," of the earth-coloured shade that is sometimes called grey and sometimes brown. Her girdle was a piece of rope, and her veil was black. Her under-garment was

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a hair shirt; but in spite of her bodily mortifications we always hear of her as full of spirit and cheer—"so that she seemed either not to feel these austerities or to laugh at them." The Bollandist legend says wisely: "The interior joy which filled her soul showed itself outwardly; for indeed when love lightens the heart the sufferings of the body are as nothing." "She refused no ordeal, nor had she any unwillingness, nor any fear." It is a noble picture, where perfect faith had cast out fear and all hardship became joy. Never unwilling and never afraid! No wonder the work wrought by such a type of womanhood still persists and spreads.

The abbess desired a title for her community, and remembering how poverty was the distinctive mark of the Franciscan, she wrote to Pope Innocent III to grant them the title of Poor Ladies. There has been some confusion as to the date of this appeal, probably because there was first granted by Innocent III in 1215 the "*Titulo Paupertatis*," or title of Poor Ladies; and subsequently by Gregory IX in 1228 the "*Privilegium Paupertatis*," or right never to be forced to receive possessions. Certainly Thomas of Celano distinctly states that "When she wished a name for her Order, she prayed Innocent III that they might be called after poverty." And in her "Testament" Clare says: "I left nothing undone to procure this right of poverty from Innocent III, under whose pontificate our Order began." Whereas the document still preserved at Assisi is dated 1228 and signed by Gregory IX.

I will to believe that the "*Titulo Paupertatis*" was granted in 1215, because it is the date of Magna Charta. Innocent III died in 1216.

Is the picture of our noble abbess clear to the reader's mind? There on the hill-side amidst the olives is the tiny church and cloister, and there are gathered some thirty or forty of the brightest and best of the ladies of Assisi engaged in work and prayer and in penance. Their

abbess of the poor robe and the cheerful countenance is foremost in undertaking disagreeable duties in the infirmary, or in washing the feet of the lay-sisters; but she is also busy with new foundations all the world over, and with correspondence with Pope and cardinals about her rule and her Order. Her needle works swiftly at fine altar-linen, and "St. Francis, when he was in Assisi, was wont often to visit St. Clare and give her holy counsels" (*Fioretti*.)

But the earthly life never runs long on untroubled lines. At the Pentecostal Chapter in 1219 Francis decided to join the crusade of the new Pope Honorius III, and he sailed from Ancona on the 24th of June. He left the growing Order of Poor Clares in the charge of Cardinal Ugolino, only reserving to his personal government the convent of St. Damiano. Ugolino was a great admirer of the Franciscan Order, but never able to wholly grasp the idea of evangelical poverty which governed Francis. A convent of Benedictine nuns at Monticelli, near Florence, had asked to put on the Franciscan habit. Ugolino suggested that Agnes should be sent to Monticelli as abbess to inaugurate the reform. This must have been a terrible parting for the sisters; but Agnes—only twenty years of age—obeyed and went. So far the Poor Ladies had had no definite rule beyond their three vows and obedience to Francis. Cardinal Ugolino added certain points, such as continual fasting and constant silence, to the Benedictine rule, and gave it to Agnes for use at Monticelli. Alas! the mainspring of the Franciscan life was left out! The Benedictine rule allowed the possession of property, and the Lady Poverty was by it unhonoured. Here began the great struggle of Clare's life; if a formal rule was necessary she wanted it to conform as far as possible to the rule of the Friars Minor, and above all she wanted no possessions—she wanted absolute poverty. For the time being Agnes had to accept the rule of Ugolino, but she and Clare were both strong in protest,



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and in due time, when Francis returned, that protest had effect.

During the year 1220 there were foundations at Foligno, Arezzo, Castiglione and elsewhere in Italy, and also at Santaren in Portugal and at Rheims in France. Marie de Braye was leader of the little band sent forth from Assisi to Rheims, and to her Clare gave a corporal she had worked herself and other relics to bear to the new convent. In 1221 Francis returned from the East, and instituted the third Order, which, it is thought, Ortolana then joined. Ever after his journey to Egypt and the Holy Land, Francis, never very strong, suffered from some complaint of the liver that made digestion very difficult; also he had constant inflammation of the eyes: the sword was wearing out the scabbard. But in spite of work and weariness he found time to tackle Cardinal Ugolino on the subject of that rule with my Lady Poverty left out, and together they drafted a new and wiser rule, which was sanctioned in 1224. This is the year of the stigmata; Francis, having retired to the mountain solitude of La Verna for prayer, when in an agony of love and contemplation, received in his body wounds like unto the wounds of our Saviour. He had to ride or be carried on his journey back to Assisi, for the wounds in his feet were very sore, and he was feign to hide them. But to Clare he told of them, and she made him a pair of soft shoes, and also a dressing to apply to the wound in his side. The shoes, and a beautifully fine alb also made by St. Clare, were shown at the Exhibition of Umbrian Art at Perugia in 1907: the dressing or bandage for the side, all stained by blood, is preserved in a silver casket at the church of Santa Chiara at Assisi. It is the great privilege of the present writer to have seen these things. The alb is very fine work, but very long; tradition asserts it was made for St. Francis, but tradition also asserts that St. Francis was very short; the shoes and alb are



now put away over the altar in the chapel at St. Chiara and cannot be seen. The privilege of seeing the bandage was granted by the courtesy of Sister Marie Theresa, who was Sacristan in 1911, and who put the precious casket in the rota and turned it, and allowed us to take it to a *pric-dieu* in the chapel and open it. It brings the sweet story of this friendship of saints so very near to be allowed to see these things.

It is probably to this year of 1224 that an undated letter from Agnes to Clara belongs, for in it she rejoices in the new rule. Wadding thinks it should be dated 1221; but the exact year is of no importance. Here it is slightly abbreviated: "To the very venerable my loved Mother in Jesus Christ, Sister Clare, and all the community, the humble Sister Agnes, least disciple of Christ, commends herself.

"Dearest Mother, what tribulation and sadness possess me body and soul, for the reason that I am parted from thee and my holy sisters. I believed that I was united for life and death to those who with me consecrated themselves to Heaven, but I find myself deluded and exceeding sorrowful. It remains for thee to aid me by prayer, O sweetest sister and mother, that I may be allowed to return to thee and my sisters. And I pray you all to thank God that I find in this house so much concord, peace and charity. These sisters treat me with the greatest love and respect, and show me always a ready obedience. Know also that they and I through all our lives desire to observe exactly thy holy precepts and counsels. I would have thee know that the Supreme Pontiff concedes to me, according to thy intention and mine, not to hold any possessions, as I petitioned him. Lastly, use your mediation to make the Minister-General often visit and console us in the Lord. Grace be with you. Amen."

It was in 1224 that Francis sent Brother Agnellus to England as Minister-Provincial, and Thomas of Eccleston

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records that in "the eighth year of the Lord King Henry the Friars Minor first arrived in England."

About this time Clare desired much to see St. Francis and have conversation with him once more at the Portiuncula. The pretty story of this their last supper is told in the *Piorette*. Some modern friars have chosen to disbelieve it, because it shows St. Clare leaving the cloister. But it was a friar and friend of St. Francis who wrote it. We translate from Loccatelli—

"Clare, wishing to increase in fervour, greatly desired to see St. Francis once again. Perhaps she remembered that St. Benedetto saw St. Icolastica and spoke to her once every year. She longed also, because at that time the popes had not yet shut up the nuns in the cloister, to return to the chapel of St. M. degli Angeli, where she had pronounced her first vows: to renew them, and be kindled with new ardour. She put the thing first before her God, so that nothing earthly should mix itself in her intentions; then she wrote to ask permission to go from St. Francis, who refused several times, but at last consented, and Clare with some sisters, escorted by some of the Minor Friars, went down there. The morning was passed in prayer in the venerated sanctuary, witness of her first fervour, and of her adieu to the world. Then the dinner hour arrived; food was set as usual on the bare earth close by. The friars were summoned to the meagre and poor meal, and Clare and Francis appeared. Francis preferring spiritual to bodily food, touched nothing yet, but began to speak of God, and he spoke with so much unction, and the fire which burned inwardly manifested itself so powerfully, that it was communicated to the disciples and diners, and they became all rapt in ecstasies. They seemed like the apostles in the Last Supper, absorbed in prayer. Their hands raised on high, no one spoke, and all had their eyes fixed on the skies. The Holy Spirit which filled them wished to show itself in something wonderful. In the midst of a nimbus and whirlwind, fire

was beheld to descend from on high and envelop the sanctuary, the monastery, the wood entirely, and flame and fire to issue from every part.

"Wondering and astonished, men came hastily from Assisi, from Bellona, from the neighbouring villages to the flaming Portuuncula; they wished at first to extinguish the fire, and save if possible the inhabitants. The more bold approached and penetrated the burning habitation; in place of ruin and death, they found everything entire, and every person safe and sound. They beheld Francis and Clare and the friars all rapt in contemplation; astonished, they were silent, and did not dare to disturb them. But the fame of the event spread abroad, the memory of it lasted, and it is the subject of many ancient pictures. The meal finished without earthly food being touched by any one. Clare returned to her retreat in St. Damiano, and was received by the sisters with extraordinary joyfulness. Though ignorant of the reason of her brief absence, they did not doubt that Francis had called her, perhaps they had feared to send her elsewhere to new foundations."

The last days of St. Francis on earth approached rapidly, and Fra Elias, his vicar-general, brought him to a little cell contiguous to the convent of St. Damiano, so that Clare and her nuns could nurse him, and prolong, if possible, the precious life. He stayed there forty days, and some friars, and the abbess and nuns, did all they could to alleviate his sufferings, but they increased gradually, especially in his eyes. The nights passed without sleep; he was also disturbed by rats which ran about his cell and jumped on his table and bed. Francis had resource to prayer; Clare and her nuns prayed also. And then early one morning when Clare went down the garden towards that little wattle hut, she heard a joyful voice singing—

"Laudato sia lo Signore!"

It was the *Song of the Creatures*—that wonderful hymn



of praise and thanksgiving for all that is beautiful and good : the only poem by St. Francis that has come down to this day. Clare called her nuns to listen—to learn—to join in. And the friars ran to find Fra Pacifico, the King of Verses, that he might learn this new laud and sing it wide over the kingdom of France, of which he was First Minister.

The spirit was triumphant over the body ; all was joy within. But Fra Elias was anxious still—anxious for that poor wracked frame—and he had St. Francis continually moved here and there in search of health. Early in the year 1226 Francis was sent to “breathe the spring breezes” in Tuscany (for the hill-side of Assisi is very bleak in spring), and whilst there had knowledge of the near approach of Sister Death. He begged to be carried back to the Portiuncula to die. Clare herself was very ill at this time, and full of woe at the thought that she should not see her friend and father again. “And therefore did she signify this unto the Blessed Francis by a certain brother, which, when the holy man did hear, forasmuch as he did love her above all other with fatherly affection, he was moved with pity toward her. . . . And so that she should lay aside all sadness and grief, he said unto the brother whom she had sent : ‘Go and tell Sister Clare to lay aside all sorrow and sadness for that she cannot see me just now, forasmuch as in truth let her know before her departure both she herself and my sisters shall see me, and shall be greatly comforted as concerning me.’ And it came to pass that a little after the Blessed Francis passed away in the night, and on the morrow the folk and clergy of Assisi came and bore his body by the will of the Lord to St. Damiano, . . . and removing the grating whereby the sisters were wont to communicate and to hear the Word of God, they took the body from the bier and held it for a space at the opening, so that the Lady Clare and her sisters were comforted by the sight and could kiss the wounded hands, and weep like orphans to lose so dear a father” (*Speculum Perfectionis*).



The foundations of the friendship of Francis and Clare were deep in the brotherhood of Christ ; had it been otherwise, had this been a mere human friendship, surely now would have come the break-up of Clare's life. For with the death of Francis, bitter times fell upon those who tried to be true to our Lady Poverty—to the Franciscan ideal. Fra Elias, the vicar-general, was ambitious, was a great organizer ; he meant to make a worldly success of Francis after his death, though he had not been able to do so during his life. He set to work to collect money—money which Francis had forbidden his followers to touch!—to build a great church in honour of Francis, and when Brother Leo overthrew the urn set up for receiving these alms, Elias had him scourged and turned out of Assisi. And only five months after Francis Pope Honorius III died and Cardinal Ugolino mounted the pontifical throne as Gregory IX. Clare had already had to struggle against his kindly intentions but lack of understanding. She was only thirty-four years of age, and this struggle to be allowed to live the life of poverty planned for her by Francis, was to go on for another twenty-seven years—to end only on her death-bed.

One consolation Clare had : the early companions of Francis, some of his first followers, were still her friends. They brought her as a gift the precious breviary of St. Francis, and also gave back to her keeping the alb and shoes that she had made and he had worn. Doubtless Leo went to her to be healed of his stripes, and certainly he used to take all his manuscripts to her for safe-keeping.

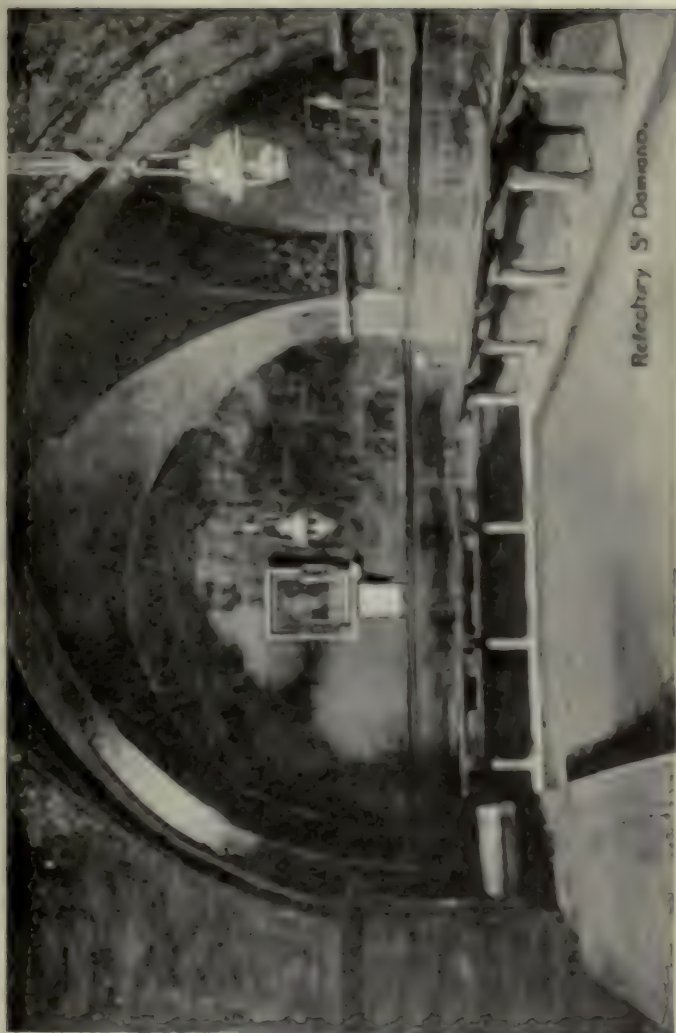
Not improbably he wrote the precious *Speculum Perfectionis* in some hut within the shelter of the wall of St. Damiano. Then there were Rufino and Giles and Juniper and others of the friars ; we shall come across stories of their intercourse with Clare as we go along. There was one attempt to break down these friendly relations. Here is the story as Loccatelli tells it—

"The Pope Gregory IX ordered that no friars without

apostolic faculty, should go to the cloister of the poor nuns of St. Damiano, even to confess them; except those deputed by the superiors of the Order, to provide for their temporal wants. As soon as Clare heard of the prohibition, she sent for the friars who were appointed to seek alms for the nuns, and with affectionate thanks sent them back to the vicar-general. 'Because if it pleased his Holiness to take away from us the friars who fed our souls with the bread of the Divine Word, those who came only to procure corporal nourishment for us, are so much less necessary.' When the Pope heard of the resolution of the saint, he revoked his decree, and commanded that the sons of St. Francis should help the nuns as hitherto."

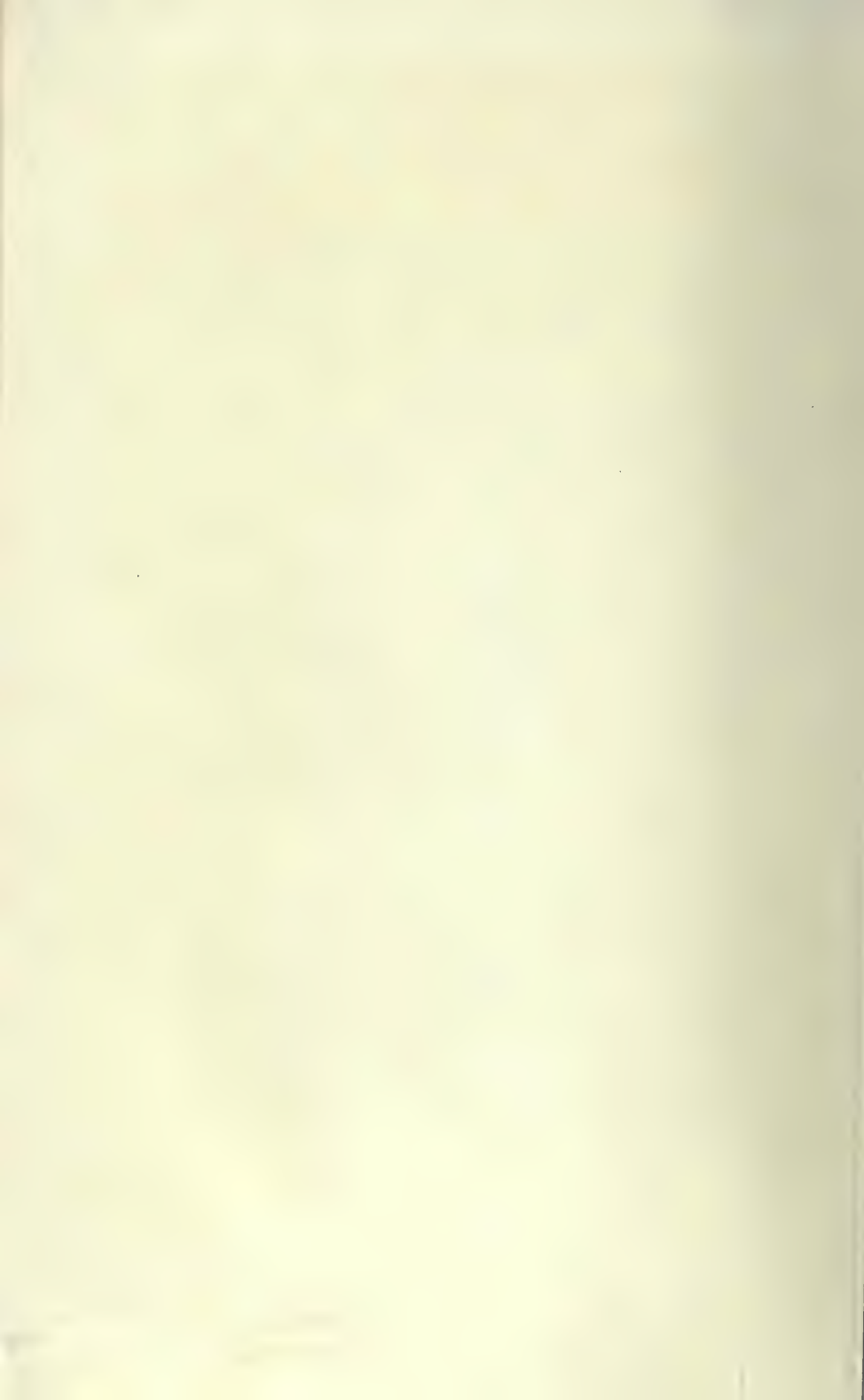
Though Clare kept herself hidden within the walls of St. Damiano, the citizens of Assisi were continually at the gates of the cloister to consult her and seek her help, and the Pope himself was amongst her visitors. The *Fioretti* has the following story of one of his visits—

"Gregory IX, of famous memory, coming to the city of the Subasio, often came down to St. Damiano to visit them. On one occasion he passed a great part of the morning with the abbess in spiritual and holy talk. At the usual hour the sign for the nuns' dinner was heard. The Pope, accompanied by some cardinals who were with him, then went to the poor and dark refectory, which has been preserved without any change till to-day. From this condescension the Superior took courage to beseech him to bless the poor table of the servants of the Lord. The Pope said: 'No, Sister Clare, you say the blessing as usual.' She replied: 'How could I, a poor, miserable woman, dare to do so in front of the Vicar of Christ, of whom I do not deserve to kiss the feet.' And the Pope: 'With the merit of the vow of obedience you will do what I tell you.' Then she distended her right hand, and blessed the table, making over it the sign of the cross. In that instant, upon all the rolls of bread distributed



*Refectory St. Damiano.*

REFECTORY AT ST. DAMIANO, WHERE ST. CLARE LIVED.





at the places of the sisters, appeared impressed a little cross. The Pope, cardinals and nuns observed the miracle with wonder, and with one accord praised the Lord for it. Some of those rolls of bread were preserved, in memory of the fact. Also at the present day it is the custom, on the birthday of the saint, to bless some pieces of bread on which is impressed a little cross, in order to satisfy the wishes and devotion of the faithful."

In the inventory of relics of St. Damiano dated 1630, and also that dated 1717, is "A loaf blessed by St. Clare," and such a little dried-up bit of bread (rather like a stale hot-cross bun) used to be shown at St. Damiano until the last year or two. It is not in the list of relics of the *Guida Ricordo* that the Little Brothers now give to the generous visitor.

In 1228 Gregory IX came to Assisi for the canonization of St. Francis, and now Clare won from him that wonderful bull, that "Privilegium Paupertatis"—that "unique privilege," as the sisters call it. The bull is still preserved in the archive at Santa Chiara, and has been photographed in the last few years by Friar Paschal Robinson.

Gregory IX, as usual, sought "holy counsel" from the saint. And one day speaking with her in St. Damiano, he hinted at more moderate privations, trying to persuade her with reasons which appeared powerful to him. To which, Clare not yielding, the Pontiff believed that the obstacle came from the vow of absolute poverty made by her to God, and therefore he said to her: "If this vow stops you, from this time forth we will absolve you from it." Clare answered: "Ah! holy father, I do not desire to be absolved from following Jesus Christ; the absolution that I implore is from my sins." Touched, the Vicar of Christ went no further; on the contrary, he promised his support and protection. And when he returned to Perugia on the 16th of September, 1228, he maintained his promise, with apostolical letters conceding to her, and

to the sisters of St. Damiano, "that they should not be obliged to receive, have, or take possessions."

The following is a translation of this bull: "Gregory, Bishop, servant of the servants of God; to his beloved daughter Clare and her handmaids in Christ, dwelling together at St. Damiano in the diocese of Assisi, salutation and apostolic benediction. It is manifested that it is the wish to dedicate yourselves wholly to God that has caused you to abandon all temporal desires; wherefore having sold all your goods and distributed your money to the poor, you propose to have no possessions, in order to follow fully in the footsteps of Him who for our sakes became poor, and who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Nor does the absence of necessities even deter you, for the arm of your Heavenly Spouse is beneath your head, and sustains the weak body which you have made subject to the ordinances of your love. Surely He who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, will not leave you without food and raiment; and when you pass into eternity His right hand shall minister to you and the plenitude of the Beatific Vision shall console you. Since, therefore, you have supplicated our Authority for this most high Poverty, We grant by these present letters that you be not constrained by any to receive possessions, nor compelled to own anything. And let no man infringe this concession, or rashly oppose it, or he will incur the wrath of Almighty God."

Clare had not only moral strength to endure, she had also physical courage to act. Italy was at this time torn with internecine strifes. Within the walls of each little city were ever two political parties ready to fly at one another's throats, and only comrades in arms when another town attacked them. And then there was the constant warfare between the Popes and the Emperor Frederick II. From every point of view St. Damiano without the city walls was none too safe a place of sojourn. Frederick during his warlike excursions east had enrolled a horde

of mercenaries, who were commonly called "the Saracens," or "the pagans," and who were particularly feared and detested by the Italians. How they twice attacked Assisi and were twice defeated by St. Clare, shall be told by Loccatelli.

"The love of Clare towards Jesus in the Sacrament, was rewarded by the magnificence of the Lord in a miracle wrought for the benefit of her, her nuns and native place. Twenty thousand Saracens had been raised by the unlucky advice of the iniquitous Emperor Frederick. One day a large horde of them invaded the contádo of Assisi, besieged the city, and also assaulted the hill on which St. Damiano is situated. Like a vulture descending on its prey, they descended on the convent, and the first wall surrounding it scaled, they were at the door. Prostrated by severe illness, Clare lay in her bed. The sisters ran to her overcome by fear, and told her of the danger; but not dismayed, she cheered them up, and supported by the two nuns Sister Francesca dal Colledimezzo and Sister Illuminata da Pisa, she got on her feet, and had herself carried before Jesus in the Sacrament, to whom sighing she exclaimed: 'You will not, O Lord, give up to the wild hearts, these souls who profess your faith: guard your handmaidens redeemed by your precious blood.' And a voice like that of a little boy seemed to issue from the sacred pyx, and replied: 'I will guard you always.' Clare replied: 'Protect also, O Lord, this my native place, which is liberal to us with food and assistance for love of you.' The same voice replied: 'Your native place will have much to suffer, but My arm will come in its defence.' Clare advanced comforted, and with the Holy of Holies in her hand, approached the gate. The infidels were then getting over the second wall, which separated them from the inner rooms of the convent, but this sight put them all to confusion. Those who had climbed on the top, becoming instantly blind, fell down outside; the others, seized by a mysterious terror, took



flight, and the whole band disappeared—cloister and country were saved.

“But one miracle alone did not suffice to make them desist from their nefarious enterprise. Perhaps from revenge, they returned soon after in larger number, led by the Imperial Captain, Vitale of Antwerp, and set siege again to the wretched city. They set fire to and robbed the surrounding country, carrying everywhere slaughter and destruction. In the name of Cæsar, the cruel leader imposed on the citizens excessive taxes, threatening, if they did not pay up, to bury them under the walls.

“It was in vain to hope for help from man, only Heaven could give it. The abbess of St. Damiano, having called her nuns round her, told them to pray for the city in danger, to which ‘for the alms that it gives us, we should be grateful.’ Before beginning her prayers, she covered her head with ashes, and made the sisters do likewise. Then she said: ‘Go, my daughters, and with your crying constrain the heart of Jesus. Who knows if He will not be melted by your tears, and save the country and its inhabitants?’ If ever it was true that the prayers of the innocent opened the gate of heaven, one saw it then. At dawn a furious tempest, directed by an invisible strength, broke over the camp of the infidels. It was not possible to fight against it. The tents were beaten down, the ordnance broken, the banners rooted up and carried away, and what was worse, the army was overcome by a general and invincible terror, and the besiegers had no other remedy than a quick flight. One does not read that the besiegers attempted another sally, they were completely routed. This flight, this dispersion, was a miracle from heaven. More than six centuries have gone by, and the memory of those two wonderful deliverances still remains. On the 22nd of June the clergy of the cathedral, and of the city, the secular fraternities, etc., celebrate it with festivities. In solemn procession they go to the present church of St. Clare, where they make



a short stop, venerating their blessed and worthy fellow-citizen, and receiving the benediction. Then they descend to St. Damiano, where, the Tabernacle kissed, which enclosed the box or pyx in which St. Clare kept the Holy Eucharist, they are present at a votive Mass, which is celebrated every year on this occasion; and for three days from then the sacred Host remains exposed for the adoration of the faithful, in that tabernacle and in that pyx."

It is in commemoration of this event that Clare is generally represented as holding the Blessed Sacrament. Also it is the privilege of the abbesses of the Poor Clares under certain circumstances to expose the Blessed Sacrament on their altars, without the interposition of a priest. This is a privilege no other women possess.

In spite of wars and alarms the foundations went steadily on. There were now 12 convents in Italy, 5 in France, 3 in Spain, 1 in Portugal and 1 in Bohemia. The foundations in Spain were started from St. Damiano, Clare sending her niece Agnes Cornaro, and her great-niece and namesake, the younger Clare. The foundation at Prague was made by Princess Agnes of Bohemia in 1236. About 1234 Agnes, having refused marriage with the Emperor Frederick II, decided to join the Poor Ladies, and wrote to Clare to express her desire and ask for advice and help. Clare was delighted, and sent five nuns from St. Damiano, and by them a copy of the Rule of 1224, sending presents and a charming letter, which is given in full in Chap. V. Thereafter Clare wrote other three letters, all of which have come down to us, to cheer the Princess and Poor Clare on her way.

A legal document signed by all the nuns at St. Damiano in 1238 shows fifty-one names: it is obvious that for all the work that was going on all over Europe from that quiet little centre numbers were necessary; but one wonders where they all found room in that small convent

—more especially in the tiny choir. Thomas of Celano says St. Damiano “resembled a garden jewelled with flowers, a bower from whence was diffused a most sweet perfume of holy living.”

Clare was not only constant in work, she was frequent in prayer. It is told that she once stayed three days in a trance, and there is no doubt that she tasted the supreme bliss of the Heavenly Vision that is the crown and glory of the religious life. There are many legends about these later years that tell of her as the ecstatic—as the contemplative.

The following is from Thomas of Celano's *Life*, and I have ventured to give it in Mrs. Balfour's translation, because of the charm of language that is hers—

“Once it happened on the holy day of the Last Supper, when we commemorate how God loved to the last His disciples, recommending for all the hour of His Passion to His Father. Then St. Clare, weary and sad, shut herself into her cell, and she prayed long to God and was sad even unto death. And in this sadness she was oppressed with a fervent love, full of desire, for she remembered how Jesus Christ was taken at this hour and ill-treated and mocked, and with this thought she was all inebriated. And the next day she was in such ecstasy that she knew not where her body was. Her eyes in her head gazed into one place without blinking or moving. And the eyes of her heart were fixed on Jesus Christ so that she saw not the things of the earth. One of her daughters, more intimate and known to her than the others, went often to see her, and always she found her in the same place. On the night of Saturday the devout daughter brought her a lighted candle. And without speaking she signed to St. Clare to remember the command of St. Francis, for he had commanded her that she should pass no day without eating something. Thus, when she came before her with her candle, Clare came to herself again, and it seemed as though she came back from another

world, and she said : ' Sweet sister, what need is there of a candle? Is it not still day?' ' Dear mother,' she answered, ' the night is gone, and the day is passed, and another night has returned.' ' Sweet sister,' said the mother, ' may this sleep that I have taken be blessed, for I desired it much and God gave it to me. But take heed that you tell no one whilst I live.' " 1

Clare had the joy of intercourse with the friars, who were old friends of hers and early companions of St. Francis. Leo, with his own hand, and in most dainty writing, made her a breviary, which is one of the relics still at St. Damiano, and other brothers came to preach to the Poor Ladies and encourage and inflame them with the love of Christ. Loccatelli tells how Clare enjoyed these sermons, and states that she once said to her sisters : " No sermon has been so little pleasing to my hearing that it has not brought great help to my soul. It is not enough, my daughters, that you listen to the censure of the preacher; it is necessary that you should gather some of it, as one does the fruit." In fact, he goes on, from her always staying to hear the preaching, one saw well with what attention and devotion she received the Word of God. She hung upon the lips of the sacred orator, immovable, and almost in a trance; but if he spoke of the suffering of the Saviour, it became impossible for her to contain her tears. On hearing a sermon of St. Francis, she was so kindled and filled with fervour, that she seemed to have a living fire in her breast, and was obliged to seek relief, and afterwards for some time remained insensible to any trouble or worry that came to disturb her.

Fra Filippo d'Adria, the noted preacher, was discoursing one day when the Lord, in the semblance of a beautiful boy, appeared, and remained beside her as long as the sermon lasted, and meanwhile she herself was

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Legend of the Lady St. Clare*, translated by Charlotte Balfour. Longmans. Price 4s. 6d.



irradiated by a soft brightness, almost like that of the stars. Sister Agnese d'Assisi, with wonder and edification, saw the marvel, and vouched for it, after the death of the sacred Mother, to the Bishop of Ipoieto. One day the Guardian of S. M. degli Angeli, yielding to the wishes of the saint, sent her a learned theologian (perhaps the celebrated Englishman, Alexander Hales) so that he should discourse to her and her nuns, and gave him as a companion the humble Brother Giles, one of the first disciples of Francis. The orator began his discourse, and pursued it with his usual eloquence and doctrine, when Brother Giles suddenly got up and asked for silence, as he also wished to preach. The theologian obeyed, and Giles, in many and fiery words, spoke of the love of God. At last he stopped and told his companion he might now resume his sermon, which he did. Afterwards the saint said to her nuns—

“Sisters, to-day one of the most ardent wishes of St. Francis is fulfilled, that is that his sons should be so humble that among them a learned professor of theology should know how to give up his place in preaching to a lay brother. In truth, I tell you that the humility of this preacher has edified me much.”

Indeed, Clare's sense of humour must also have been roused, and we do not wonder she enjoyed the incident. And through these years the strictest poverty was maintained. Clare did not content herself with being poor of spirit, that is humble of intellect and of heart, and with having renounced the goods of this world, but she wished to remove the hope of herself and of her nuns of ever having any : forbidding herself and them the possession of any temporal goods, even in common. And she and her disciples, by taking the vow of perpetual seclusion, were unable to leave the cloister to seek alms and to procure the necessaries of life. But Heaven aided her in her heroic decision. The hour of dinner arrived one day, and in the convent of St. Damiano there was nothing



but one small roll of bread. Clare ordered that it should be broken, and a portion given to the friars, who had a room near there, and were sent there to seek alms for the nuns. The other part was divided into fifty fragments (the number of the nuns) and distributed among them. The dispenser of the bread said to the Mother, smiling, that a miracle would be necessary like that of our Saviour in the desert, when He satisfied the starving crowd. The Mother, raising her eyes to heaven, repeated her order, and the bread increased so much that there was abundance for all, and it was necessary to gather up the fragments. Another time one of the sisters being very ill, it was discovered that there was no oil, so the Mother took the oil vessel, and cleansing it put it outside the cloister, so that Friar Bencivenga could go round with it begging for oil. The friar went, and taking up the vessel found it full, and complained that the Mother wished him to seek oil when there was plenty. These two miracles are referred to in Jacopone's *Lauda*.

Nobody else has told the story of these last days of St. Clare with so much sympathy and comprehension as Loccatelli in his standard *Life*, and as his book has never been translated into English, I cannot resist turning more and more to it as a guide in describing the last scenes.

Clare's soul was so ardent that she longed to throw herself among the infidels, and so gain the palm of martyrdom. Her heart was so large that it was full of solicitude, not only for her daughters gathered in St. Damiano, but also for those in the new foundations spread about Europe. Her desire grew to afflict her own body, to torture it with new devices of penance in order to bear better the Saviour's cross; but at last she was obliged to give way under the weight of an infirmity of twenty-five years' standing. Tortured by a constant fever, which increased after viewing the stigmata on the body of St. Francis, it seemed almost as if a great suffering were

the heritage left to her by him. And she suffered without complaint; she suffered from the strength of the fever, which weakened her; she suffered from new ills which from time to time were added to the original ones; she suffered from the extreme poverty which prevented her from having the means to relieve her ills; she suffered from the rigour of her voluntary and daily mortification of her body. She suffered *for* the sisters whom she had to rule and govern; and *for* the strangers who came to her to be helped, cured and consoled. Many saw her then, and did not think it possible that such a delicate woman could live so long, suffering so much, without a miracle.

Her flesh dried up, till of that innocent body there remained now only bones covered with dry skin, and the sisters of St. Damiano saw with sorrow the time approaching when their mother would be no longer with them. It was the year 1251. But then occurred a fact which shows once more how death sometimes defeats men's forecasts, and happens only when God wishes it. In St. Angelo di Panzo (the refuge of Clare and Agnes before they were transferred to St. Damiano) one of the pious sisters dreamed that she and her nuns went to visit St. Clare, who was ill at St. Damiano. They entered her cell and found her lying on a luxurious bed, surrounded by sisters, who were weeping, inconsolable at the thought of their imminent loss. In the middle of this crying and lamenting there appeared at the head of the bed a venerable and most beautiful matron, who turned to the afflicted sisters and began to console them, saying: "Do not weep, my dear ones, do not weep! The invalid will yet live some time, and will only close her eyes when the Lord comes to invite her to her heavenly bridal." When the vision disappeared, it was narrated by the nun to her companions, and told to the inhabitants of St. Damiano. They reflected on it, and did not know how to decipher it; but all, however, believed they recognized the Mother of God in the majestic and beautiful matron.

In time the signification was understood, when the Vicar of Jesus Christ and his cardinals, who represent the seventy-two disciples of the Saviour, came to visit the saint a little before she died. Indeed, Clare's sickness, if not cured, lost much of the intensity which had made them fear her immediate death. Meanwhile by the secret designs of the Providence which orders all our doings unto the end, Innocent IV, in April of this year, left France, came to Italy, and finally established himself in Perugia. Clare's malady progressed slowly, and she, seen in her bed, with her eyes fixed on high, without a word or breath, her arms crossed on her breast, her head leaning against the wall, might have been taken for dead but for a certain brightness which irradiated her face and reassured the bystanders. In those long hours of silence and of almost total obliteration of the senses, they did not know what had become of her soul; but the rays of light which issued from her body, or the two wings of flame which seemed to fly from her face and fold themselves round her head, filled the sisters with respect and with holy admiration.

The Pope having arrived in the neighbouring Perugia, and the news of the illness of the abbess of the "Poor Ladies" being always more grave, the Cardinal Rainaldo, Bishop of Ostia, went from there to visit her. The virtues of Gregory IX, of whom he was a nephew, survived in him, and also the affection and veneration of that great pontiff for the heroic St. Clare. The cardinal came to St. Damiano on September 4, 1252.

On seeing him appear before her, the virgin humbled herself and glorified God. He seeing her thus failing in strength and serene in aspect, was edified and sorrowful. Among the other consolations that he gave her, the excellent cardinal also brought and offered her with his own hands the Holy Viaticum, by which the invalid was sensibly reinvigorated. She told him of the last ardent wish of her heart, the confirmation of her Order on the



base of the most absolute and most strict poverty. This seemed to be the thread that attached her, among so many ailments, to a life full of pain, and her death seemed to depend on this. The excellent prelate promised to attend to it, and promised also to have her nuns in his particular care and attention. Returned to Perugia, and the permission of the Pope received on the 16th of September, that is, eight days after his visit to Clare, he sent out the letter which begins: "*Quia vos dilectæ filiæ*," in which the constitutions of St. Francis for the second Order are inserted textually and fully confirmed.

This was a great joy, but it did not satisfy Clare. She felt she could not die till that privilege of absolute poverty to her Order was granted by an apostolic bull. Meanwhile to the Christmas of 1252 belongs one of the most beautiful stories of the joys of the saint. Clare was too ill to move, and on the eve of the Feast of the Nativity she lay lone on her bed whilst the other nuns went to the midnight Mass. Every Catholic knows what a glorious privilege it is to attend that most devotional service, and Clare, like Francis, had a special devotion to the Holy Child—the "*Jesulino*," as the Italian children say. Suddenly to Clare's ears came the sound of bells—the bells of the great church of St. Francesco, nearly two miles away. Then came the sound of singing—*Adeste fideles*—and Clare's spirit went, and her eyes saw the altar and the crib, and her ears heard the whole Mass, nay, and she received Communion. And when her nuns returned and said: "Oh, had you but been there to share our bliss!" Clare replied: "I was there, my daughters!" Surely if the path of the saint is stony, there are also great consolations.

Next spring Agnes returned from Monticelli to be with her dying sister. Also Innocent IV transferred his court to Assisi, and from there he solemnly canonized the Martyr St. Stanislaus Bishop of Cracow, and consecrated several of the altars and churches. Clare's state of health



became more precarious every day, and from the 28th of July and after, she would neither taste food nor drink of any sort. News of it flew about the city. Many persons, among whom were nobles, prelates, cardinals, etc., came to see her and to take farewell of her. More dead than alive, she was all gentleness and sweetness with every one. One Friar Rainaldo, touched by her long and bitter suffering, tried to comfort her, encouraging her to patience and resignation. And, smiling, she answered, "I thank you, father, for your charity, but you may be certain that from that most happy day in which I was called to religion by the Lord, through the means of His servant Francis, no pain, no grief, no privation has ever been able to separate me from the love of Jesus Christ." The day of the 9th of August broke, and the Pontiff, fearing a loss that he judged irreparable, came to see her with his cardinals. This was the last time that he found her alive. On the appearance of Christ's Vicar, the cadaverous face of the virgin seemed to be reanimated, a light of mysterious and holy happiness came to irradiate those eyes always modest, now almost dim. The vision of the nun of St. Angelo di Panzo was verified. The Pope held out his right hand for her to kiss; the virgin, confused by this condescension, prayed him also to allow her to kiss his foot. The Pope, not knowing how to refuse anything to so much fervour and humility, caused a stool to be brought, and placed his foot for her to kiss. Then she besought plenary absolution for her sins, and he cried: "Please God my soul may need absolution as little as does yours!" And raising his eyes to heaven, he gave her plenary pardon of her faults, and added the Apostolic Benediction. Everything now seemed finished, but it was not so yet. God, who prolonged that almost exhausted existence, reanimated also the vigour of St. Clare, so that she could ask of the visible head of the Church a last favour, that was the confirmation, with an apostolic bull, of her Rule, founded with

the privilege of absolute poverty. The Pontiff was somewhat perplexed at this unexpected demand, and said : " My daughter, for such a favour no one ever before has made this request to the Holy See, nor if they had made it would have obtained it. However, we wish to concede you all you desire." This said, he signed with his own hand the first clause of the bull of confirmation, in which the Rule of the Clares is inserted in full, as had been approved by the cardinal-protector in September of the preceding year : and this bull was sent off on the same day. Loccatelli adds : " I do not believe, my reader, that any miser has ever toiled all his life to accumulate treasure as our Holy Mother toiled to acquire poverty ; nor that he regretted so much at the point of death to be obliged to leave his wealth, as she exulted in being divested bare of everything."

Fed, to her ineffable content, with the Bread of Angels, the dying woman said to those around her : " Thank the Lord, my daughters, for His immense goodness extended to me, His poor servant, to-day. The fullness of His grace is such, that neither heaven nor earth would suffice to compensate Him for it. To-day I have received within me my Bridegroom, and have been visited by His vicar." Among the bystanders, the most assiduous and perhaps the most grieved was Agnes, her youngest sister, and her first nun, who had till now only spoken with sighs and weeping. At last she was able to loose her tongue and say : " Then, sister, you are leaving me, and why do you not obtain grace for me to follow you to heaven ? " The dying woman replied : " It is the will of the Lord that I should die before you, my sister ; but do not weep ; God will make you live for some days longer to give you a great consolation, but very soon you will rejoin me."

Many of the friars—the first companions of St. Francis—gathered round the dying woman. Leo, in his grief, could but kiss the poor and humble bed. But Clare called





MONASTERY AND CHURCH OF ST. CHIARA, ASSISI.



joyfully to Juniper, that quaintest follower of the folly of the Cross : "What news, O brother? Come, tell me of the things of Christ!" And Juniper spoke with love and fervour such burning words as raised all thoughts from things of earth.

Clare was heard whispering, and when asked to whom she spoke, replied : "I talk a little to my blessed soul to whom the heavens are already opening." It was the 11th of August, and towards evening the end came. The nuns saw a visionary procession of virgins, headed by Our Lady, enter the door and surround the bed ; and when the vision vanished Clare's soul had gone also.

Clare was in her sixtieth year when she died, and had survived Francis twenty-seven years.

The Pope with his cardinals and prelates were present in person at the funeral. The body was for safety carried into the town to the church of San Giorgio, the poor disconsolate nuns being faithfully promised that a place should soon be provided for them near their saintly mother.

In the December of the following year Innocent IV died, and was succeeded by Cardinal Rainaldo, Protector of the Poor Ladies, under the title of Alexander IV. He solemnly canonized St. Clare on the 26th of September, 1255, in the first year of his pontificate and barely two years after her death.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RULE OF THE POOR CLARES

THE story of the Rule of the Poor Clares is of one long fight for simplicity and austerity. St. Francis had given them at the beginning but some few lines of writing, which St. Clare quotes in the sixth section of her Rule, thus—

*"Since by the inspiration of the Lord you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the Supreme King, the Celestial Father, and have espoused yourselves to the Holy Spirit in order to live in evangelical perfection, I will and promise, for me and for my Little Brothers, always to have a diligent care and special solicitude for you, as for them."*

And later on, shortly before his death, he had written—

*"I, poor Brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ, and of His most Holy Mother, and persevere in it to the end. And I pray you all, my sisters, and do counsel you to always live this most saintly life of poverty. And guard well lest any by doctrine or counsel at any time draw you away from it."*

This, together with their vow of obedience when assuming the Franciscan habit, had been sufficient for St. Clare and the early sisters at St. Damiano, but when, in 1219, Francis left for the East, and new foundations were arising at Florence, Rheims and elsewhere, Francis asked the Cardinal Ugolino to undertake the organization of the new convents and give them a rule. Father Leo, in his *Life of Brother Giles*, tells us that Francis had already been approached to know whether the rule of St.

Augustin or St. Benedict would be the best basis, and had cried out : "Oh no ! that is not our vocation ! Our call is to the folly of the Cross."

But Cardinal Ugolino, however appreciative of the Franciscan movement, had not the fervour—the simplicity amounting to genius—of a saint. In a cautious and prudent spirit he took the well-tried rule of St. Benedict, straitened it a little as regards silence and fasting, but left the allowance of possessions. This rule is inserted in the brief "*Cum omnis vera*," but is not worth quoting, for so soon as Francis returned and found that his Lady Poverty had been slighted, he approached the cardinal with another rule, or rather, as Wadding says : "St. Francis and Ugolino wrote a new rule for St. Clare." This rule was founded on the rule of the First Order, and was verbally sanctioned by Honorius III and bears date 1224 ; it was formally approved only in 1253, two days before Clare's death, and the original bull was only discovered in Assisi in 1893, wrapped inside an old habit of the saint ! This is known as "the First Rule of St. Clare." It is the rule still followed at Assisi and elsewhere where the primitive spirit of poverty prevails. Modifications of the rule were approved in 1245 and 1247 ; and finally, in 1263, St. Bonaventura submitted a codification which Urban IV sanctioned and made obligatory on all convents not under the First Rule. He declared that the nuns should bear, without distinction, the name of "Sisters of St. Clare," but as a matter of fact they are commonly called Urbanists, and their rule is known as the Second Rule.

In the fifteenth century arose St. Colette, who reformed the Order in France, and added to the First Rule certain constitutions in force in the majority of the convents to-day. At the same time St. Bernardino of Siena was reforming the convents in Italy, and rather later in Spain the "Conceptionists" were founded, who are allied to the Clares. Then, in 1540, Mother Mary Longo of Naples

introduced what is known as the Capuchin reform, by adding to the primitive rule constitutions similar to St. Colette's, and putting the convents under the jurisdiction of the Capuchini. Then, in the seventeenth century, came Cardinal Barberini, who founded the Alcantarines by adding to the strict rule of St. Clare the solitude and silence approved by St. Peter of Alcantara. The nuns in this Order live apart in cells, and do not work in a community room; all their communications are by signs—they add the isolation of the Carthusian into the Franciscan rule. It is but a small branch; there can never be many women called to this life. It will be remembered that Edward VII of England visited a community of Alcantarines near Biarritz shortly before his death, and was much interested in their agricultural labours, their method of prostrating and their powers of silence. These are all but branches of one tree.

I propose to give here merely the First Rule of St. Clare, and then the constitutions of St. Colette. They are taken from the Handbook for the use of the Sisters of the Monastery of the Most Holy Cross in Rome, and bear date 1728.

**FIRST RULE OF THE NUNS OF ST. CLARE, given by their Father, St. Francis, and confirmed by Innocent IV.**

Bull of Pope Innocent IV upon the Rule of St. Clare.

Innocent, Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his beloved daughters in Jesus Christ, Clare the abbess, and the other sisters of the monastery of St. Damiano at Assisi, salutation and apostolic benediction. The Apostolic See desires to condescend to the pious wishes and grant the honest desires of those who ask a favour; since then we are humbly requested on your part to confirm your rule of life under which you live in common in one spirit, vowed to the highest poverty (a rule given you by St. Francis and willingly accepted), and which our venerable



brother the Bishop of Ostia and Velletri has approved, and which no one letter from the same Bishop gives completely : it is hereby ordained and apostolically confirmed and approved. Our ear is inclined to your prayer, we confirm the letters of the said Bishop by our apostolic authority, and solemnly sanction the said Rule.

*In the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

#### CHAPTER I—OF OBEDIENCE.

Here commences the Rule and Form of Life of the Order of the Poor Sisters which the Blessed Francis instituted and ordained, the which principally is to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, without property, and in chastity. Clare, unworthy servant of Christ and little flower of St. Francis, promises obedience and reverence to Pope Innocent and his canonical successors, and to the Church of Rome. And since in the beginning of her conversion she and her sisters promised obedience to the Blessed Francis, they promise like obedience to his successors. And the other sisters are bound always to obey the successors of the Blessed Francis, and of Sister Clare and the other abbesses canonically elected who shall succeed her.

#### CHAPTER II—ON NOVICES.

If any one by divine inspiration come to us wishing to observe our Rule, the abbess must ask the consent of all the sisters, and if the majority consent she may receive her if she have leave of the Lord Cardinal Protector. And when the time comes for her to enter the abbess shall examine her carefully as to the Catholic Faith and the Sacraments of the Church. And if she believes and faith-

fully holds these things, and undertakes to observe them to the end, and if she is not married, or being married if her husband has entered an Order with the authority of the Bishop of his diocese and has vowed continence, and there being no other impediment to her keeping of the Rule, such as great age, or infirmity of mind or body; let the manner of our Life and Rule be clearly told to her. If this being done she still desire to be a sister, let her be told in the words of the Holy Gospel: "Go, and sell all that thou hast in this world," and let her distribute it to the poor for the love of Christ; and if she cannot reasonably do this or possesses nothing it is enough that she so wills. The abbess and all the sisters must guard against being solicitous for or thinking about these temporal things, and must leave her free to give liberally of her goods as the Lord inspires her. And if it happens that she demand counsel, let them send her to some God-fearing person, by whose advice the goods may benefit the poor.

This being done let her hair be cut round, and her secular dress put aside, and give her three tunics and a cloak. And from that hour do not let her go out of the monastery save for some useful, manifest, reasonable and probable cause.

And when the year of her probation is finished, she shall be received under obedience, promising to observe perpetually our form of life and our poverty.

No one shall be veiled during the time of probation, and for avoidance of fatigue when serving, the sisters may possess a small and convenient cloak.

The abbess must be discreet in providing garments according to the needs of persons, times and places; and according to the country and the cold. The abbess must be solicitous to provide a novice-mistress from amongst the most discreet in the monastery, who shall diligently instruct them and train them in all holy conversation and humble ways according to our form of life and profession.

No one can be received into the monastery except according to our form of profession.

And for love of the sweet Holy Child who was wrapt in poor swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, and for love of His Holy Mother, I pray, admonish and exhort all my sisters to ever clothe themselves in vile garments.

### CHAPTER III—OF THE DIVINE OFFICE, CONFESSION AND COMMUNION.

The sisters who can read shall say the office according to the custom of the Friars Minor; therefore they may have breviaries and read the same, without singing. And those who for any reasonable cause cannot read their hours, let them repeat their Paternosters, like the other sisters. Those who cannot read must say twenty-four Paternosters for Matins, five for Lauds, seven for Prime, Tierce, Sext and Nones, twelve for Vespers, and seven for Compline. Those who can read are bound to say the Office of the Dead according to the Breviary, and those who cannot read shall say instead at Vespers and Matins seven Paternosters and the Requiem *Æternam*. When any sister of the monastery dies those who cannot read shall say fifty Paternosters and a Requiem *Æternam* for the repose of her soul, and the others shall say the Office of the Dead.

The sisters shall fast at all times, but on the Nativity of our Saviour Jesus Christ they may take two meals, no matter what day the feast may fall on. The abbess may mercifully dispense the feeble, and in time of manifest necessity the sisters are not bound to bodily fasting.

With the leave and licence of the abbess all the sisters shall confess at least twelve times a year, taking care to guard themselves against using any words which do not belong to the confession, or are necessary for the salvation of their souls. They should communicate at least seven



times a year, namely on the Nativity of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Holy Thursday, Easter, Pentecost, the Annunciation, the Feast of St. Francis, and All Saints.

#### CHAPTER IV—THE ELECTION OF THE ABBESS.

For the election of the abbess the sisters must observe the canonical form. They must procure the presence of the General or Provincial of the Order of Friars Minor, who with the words of God shall gather them to concord and to seek the common good in the choice they have to make. And none shall be elected who is not professed, and if one be elected and given the office who is not professed, the sisters shall not obey her until she has made her profession of life and of poverty. And if in process of time it shall appear to all the sisters that the one chosen does not suffice for their service and for the common good, then must the sisters according to the aforesaid form elect another more capable of acting as abbess and mother. She who is elected shall consider what burden she has taken upon her, and to whom she must render account of the flock under her charge. Let her be solicitous to be first in all virtues and holy customs, that the sisters may be moved to obey her, not because of her office, but through love and without fear. Let her guard against private friendships, lest in showing partiality for one she give scandal to the others. She shall console sisters in affliction and give good counsel in trouble; thus the oppressed shall find a remedy and the weak not be overcome by depression. In all things she must live the common life, but chiefly in the church, dormitory, refectory and infirmary, and in clothing; and let her see that her vicar does the same. Once a week at the least the abbess must hold a chapter with all the sisters, and she and they ought humbly to accuse themselves of all their public faults and negligences. At the same time the abbess and all the sisters should consult about those things



which have to do with the usefulness and probity of the monastery, for the Lord often reveals great things to the least amongst us. Let no grave debt be made without the consent of all the sisters and of manifest necessity, and let it be made through a lawyer. The abbess and sisters shall not receive any deposit in the monastery, for from this cause may arise disturbances and scandals. To conserve the bond of mutual love and peace let all the officials of the monastery be elected; in the same way let at least eight of the most discreet sisters be elected of whom the abbess must take counsel in what appertains to one form of life. The sisters may, and ought (if it appears useful and expedient), to remove the officials and discreets and elect others in their place.

#### CHAPTER V—OF SILENCE.

From the hour of Compline to that of Tierce, the sisters shall keep silence—save those that serve outside—and they must always keep silence in the church, dormitory and refectory and when eating; except that in the infirmary for the care and recreation of those who are ill they may speak discreetly. They may, however, always and everywhere say what is absolutely necessary in a low voice. It is not allowed to the sisters to talk in the parlour without the presence of two sisters who can hear what is said. But let none presume to go to the grille without the presence of at least three sisters appointed by the abbess or her vicar from amongst the discreets. The same mode of talking must be observed by the abbess and her vicar, and let them go seldom to the grille and never to the door. Inside the grille a curtain must be placed which may not be moved. During St. Martin's Lent and the Greater Lent no one must speak in the parlour, unless to the priest for confession, or for some other manifest necessity; this is left to the prudence of the abbess or her vicar.

## CHAPTER VI—THE SISTERS MAY POSSESS NOTHING.

After our Great and Heavenly Father by His grace had illumined my heart, that by the example and teaching of our Blessed Father, St. Francis, I became penitent, I and my sisters voluntarily promised obedience to St. Francis shortly after his conversion. And he, noting that we feared no poverty, toil, tribulation or worldly scorn, but rather rejoiced in the same, moved by piety, wrote us a form of life thus : "Since by the inspiration of Christ you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the Supreme King, the Heavenly Father, and have espoused yourselves to the Holy Spirit in order to live in evangelical perfection, I will and promise, for me and for my brethren, ever to have a diligent care and special solicitude for you, as for them." This promise he diligently kept all his life, and wished it always to be kept by his friars. And since he did not wish us at any time to fall away from that life of sublime poverty which we had embraced, nor those who came after us, on another occasion shortly before his death he wrote us his last wish, saying : "I, poor Brother Francis, desire to follow the life and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Holy Mother, and persevere in the same till death. And I pray you all, my sisters, and do counsel you, to live always in saintly poverty. And guard well lest any by doctrine or advice attempt to draw you away from it."

And since I and my sisters have ever been solicitous to keep this promise of holy poverty which we made to our Lord God and to the Blessed Francis, there is an obligation on the abbesses who shall succeed me in office and on all the sisters to keep it inviolate and never receive any possessions or property themselves, nor through an intermediary, nor anything that can reasonably be called property, save so much land as necessity requires for the decency and seclusion of the monastery ; and this land

must not be used except as a garden to supply the needs of the inmates.

#### CHAPTER VII—OF WORK.

The sisters to whom our Lord has given the grace to work shall labour faithfully and devotedly after Thierce at what is decent and useful to the community, so that idleness, which is the enemy of the soul, may not paralyze the spirit of prayer and devotion, to which all temporal things should be subservient. And the manual labour must be assigned to each at Chapter by the abbess or her vicar in the presence of all the sisters. In the same way let alms be distributed that are sent to the sisters by any one, so that each may make claim in common. And these things shall be distributed by the abbess or her vicar with the aid of the discreets.

#### CHAPTER VIII—OF GOODS IN COMMON AND OF ILLNESS.

The sisters must not appropriate to themselves house, or lodging, or anything; but like pilgrims and strangers, serving the Lord in these times in poverty and humility, let them beg confidently for alms; nor need they be ashamed, for our Lord made Himself poor in this world for our sake. This is that highest state of poverty, dear sisters, which has made you heiresses and queens of the kingdom of heaven—has made you poor in goods, but rich in virtue. Let that be your portion which leads to eternal life; to that cling more closely than aught else beneath the skies, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

No sister may receive or send letters, or give anything outside the monastery for any cause, without the permission of the abbess; nor must she take in anything, not ordered by the abbess, without special permission. And



if her father or mother or other relations send a sister gifts, the abbess shall give them to her if she need them, but if she need them not she should charitably give them to those who do need them. If money is sent, the abbess, with the aid of the discreets, shall use it to provide necessities.

The abbess is strictly bound to make charitable and compassionate provision for the sick according to the possibility of the place, and to make inquiry as to what utensils, food and other necessities their infirmities require. Because it is an obligation on all the sisters to serve and care for the sick as they would themselves wish to be cared for if they were taken ill. And let each freely make known her necessities, for if a mother love and nurture her daughter according to the flesh, how much more solicitous should a religious be to care for her spiritual sister.

The sick are permitted the use of a mattress of straw and a feather pillow for the head; and those who need woollen coverlets may have them. The sick may speak edifying words to those who visit them from without in order to console them. But it is not intended that other sisters who have leave to speak should accost the visitors save in the presence of two discreets; and this applies to the abbess and her vicar.

#### CHAPTER IX—OF PENANCES.

If any sister at the instigation of the enemy shall sin mortally against the form of our profession, the abbess or other sisters shall admonish her the first two or three times; and if she does not amend, but continues contumacious, she shall dine on bread and water on the floor of the refectory in the presence of all the sisters; or the abbess may inflict still greater punishment. And so long as she is contumacious let all pray to God to enlighten



her heart and make her penitent. But the abbess and the sisters must guard against being angry or perturbed by the sinner, for wrath and worry hinder charity in themselves and in others. If it should happen (which God forbid) that through words or otherwise quarrel and scandal should arise between sisters, let the one who is the cause of the evil, at once, before she offers her gift of prayer to God, not only throw herself at the feet of the other and ask forgiveness, but also supplicate her prayers to the Lord for pardon: and that sister shall remember the words of our Lord that if we do not forgive from the heart, neither will the Heavenly Father forgive us, and she shall freely pardon her sister all the wrong she has done.

The sisters who serve outside the monastery shall not stay out long except of manifest necessity, and they shall walk modestly and speak little, so that those who see them shall be edified by their behaviour. Above all they must guard against dealings and conferences with suspected persons. They must not act as godmothers to either males or females, lest occasion arise for scandal or trouble: nor must they presume to repeat in the monastery the news of the world. And they are inviolably bound to hold secret all that is said and done in the monastery, lest there should possibly be scandal. And if any one through simplicity shall offend in these two things, let the abbess mercifully impose a penance; but if the fault is repeated the abbess shall take counsel with the discreets and award a proportionate punishment.

#### CHAPTER X—VISITATIONS OF ABBESS.

The abbess shall visit and admonish her sisters and correct them with humility and charity, not commanding them anything contrary to their conscience, or against our form of profession. And let the sisters who are under

her remember that for love of God they have given up their own wills, and are therefore strictly obliged to obey the abbess in all those things they have promised to observe—so long as they are not contrary to their conscience nor the Rule. The abbess must behave to them with the familiarity of a lady with her maidens; for in truth it ought to be that she is at once the mistress and the servant of all the sisters. I admonish and exhort all the sisters in Jesus Christ that they guard against pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, and all care and anxiety as to this world; and against distractions, grumblings, discords and divisions. Let them always be solicitous to maintain amongst themselves that oneness of good-will which is the bond of perfection.

Those who do not know how to read should not be curious to learn, but should consider this, that above all things they should desire to have the spirit of the Lord and its holy workings; praying always with a pure heart for humility and patience under tribulations and infirmities; loving those who rebuke and abash them, for our Lord says: "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," and "He that shall persevere to the end shall be saved."

#### CHAPTER XI—THE PORTRESS.

The portress should have sober manners and discreet, and be of a suitable age. If she is assigned a companion, which may be necessary, let her be able to fill the office of portress in all things. Let the door be closed with two iron catches, with good bolts and bars; and at night it must be locked with two keys, one of which must be in the charge of the portress and the other of the abbess. In the daytime the door must not be left without a guard, and must be kept locked with one key. Be diligent to see that

the door is never left open, save when it cannot conveniently be helped.

Nor must the door be opened wide enough for entrance to any one not bearing the licence of the Pope or Cardinal, nor must any one enter the monastery before sunrise or after sunset, nor may the sisters permit any one to remain after sunset, unless for a manifest, reasonable and inevitable cause. If it is necessary for workmen to enter, let the abbess place a suitable person in charge of the door to open to the workmen, but to no one else. The sisters must guard against being seen by those who thus enter of necessity.

#### CHAPTER XII—OF THE VISITOR.

Your visitor shall always belong to the Order of Friars Minor, as our Cardinal commands; he must be honest and discreet and of known piety. His office is to correct in the superior, as well as in others, any excesses committed against our form of profession. He may stand at the grille in such manner that he can be seen, and talk liberally with one or more sisters at a time about what appertains to his office as visitor, as he may judge expedient. The confessor may not enter the monastery except in cases of necessity, and when he is in let him remain in an exposed place where he can be seen by others. And the right of entry is to confess the sick who cannot otherwise be confessed, and to give them communion; and to give Extreme Unction, and say the Office for the Departing Soul. The sisters are bound to have for their protector that cardinal of the Church who is appointed by the Pope to the Friars Minor; that, ever subject and prostrate at the feet of Holy Church and constant in the Catholic Faith, they may observe the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His Holy Mother.



## 66 ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER

Here finishes the rule of the Poor Ladies of St. Clare. The following is the conclusion of the bull which confirms the Rule—

To no one is it permissible to infringe in any way this our Letter of Confirmation, or to presume to contravene it. But if any one should dare attempt so to do, let him know that he will thereby incur the indignation of Almighty God and of His blessed apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Assisi the 9th day of August, in the 11th year of our pontificate.

STATUTES AND CONSTITUTIONS OF THE POOR SISTERS OF THE ORDER OF MENDICANTS, which is the second Order of St. Francis under the First Rule of St. Clare; together with the institutions and reformatations of the Blessed Collette, reformatrice of the said Order.

Which constitutions were made with the apostolic authority of Fra Guglielmo da Casale, Minister-General, and are the necessary explanation of the First Rule given by St. Francis and approved by Pope Gregory IX and Pope Innocent IV; the which Rule was observed by the sisters drawn to Colette, and also by others who lived under the governance of the fathers of the Order of St. Francis.

Fra Guglielmo da Casale, servant and Minister-General of the Order of Friars Minor, Doctor in Theology, to his devout sister in Christ, Sister Colette, foundress of many monasteries of the Poor Ladies of the Order of St. Clare, Minoresses—monasteries already recently started in France, and to be founded later in the same manner and under the same rule: to the foundress and to the abbess of these monasteries, and to all the sisters present and future, salutations in Jesus Christ, the Spouse of Virgins.



The merits of the noble and admirable virgin Chiara, under the counsels of holy poverty and of St. Francis, increased greatly and added to the splendours of Holy Church; and the fruition of these merits of the virgin, spouse of Jesus Christ, are of perpetual and immortal delight, and make clear not only to those who followed and conformed to the leading of her blessed spirit, but continue to draw faithful Christians to God, as witness the great number of virgins and widows who in these times seek the odour of sanctity and leave the tempestuous seas of this century for the portal of peaceful religion. We recognize all these things with great joy, and give thanks to Almighty God, who through feeble natures and in spite of faults, by a divine mercy raises up new flowers to follow the rule and form of life instituted by our father, St. Francis, and admirably followed by our glorious mother, Clare. Their fervour desires certain directions with regard to the constitutions, that they may be worthy imitators of their mother and share in her merits.

Seeing which, I send to our daughter in Christ, Sister Colette, head not only of the many in France, but mother of all the daughters of this profession, what she has petitioned in the way of directions and constitutions for all her daughters in Christ. Wherefore being touched by your humble prayers and by theirs, we send our apostolic powers to all the abbesses and sisters of those monasteries founded through the merits given you by God, and to all other monasteries to be founded in the same form, these written instructions and constitutions to be by them perpetually observed. And you should hold these constitutions in reverence, for they were made after much deliberation, and were submitted to his Eminence the Lord Cardinal of Santa Croce and of St. Angelo, Legate of the Apostolic Chair, and President of the Sacred Council, and by many doctors of theology and fathers noted for science and virtue.

Firstly, it might be a matter of doubt to the sisters as to whether they are obliged to observe as precept the whole of the Holy Gospel for the profession of their manner of life ; since at the beginning are these words : The rule and manner of life of the Order of the Poor Ladies, instituted and ordained by the Blessed Francis, is to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, without possessions and in chastity.

Being desirous of providing for the consciences of the sisters and of removing as far as possible every doubt from their minds, we reply to such doubts in conformity with the reply made by many supreme pontiffs in the declaration of the Rule of the Minor Brothers ; that is, that the sisters for the profession of their manner of life and rule are not held to the observance of the whole of the Holy Gospel, but only to those things that are in the Rule and in such manner as they are there put forth. Therefore, since in the manner of life and in the Rule many Gospel counsels are expressed, some under words of precept, either affirmative or negative or equivalent, we declare that the sisters are bound to observe them as precepts.

Other counsels of the Gospel are therein expressed not in the manner aforesaid, but as words of admonition or of exhortation or of information, and we declare that they are not bound to these otherwise than as to admonitions, exhortations and information.

And although the sisters are not bound by rule except to the aforesaid, nevertheless they must endeavour to observe the others also, and the more so that, despising all the things of this world and being made imitators of so great a mother, they have elected to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and to walk in the way of the perfection of the Gospel, making of themselves a sweet-smelling sacrifice and a pleasing burnt-offering to God.

## CHAPTER I—OF THE ENTRANCE INTO RELIGION.

It was written in the beginning of Chap. II of the Rule and Manner of Life, that the abbess, with the consent of the majority of the sisters, and having the licence of the Lord Cardinal Protector<sup>1</sup> of the Order, could receive any one as sister in the convent; but seeing that the government of this same Order has been entirely committed by Innocent IV and other supreme pontiffs to the Minister-General and to the provincial ministers of the Order of the Minor Brothers, we declare and we say that the Minister-General in the whole Order, and the provincial ministers in their provinces, or their trustees, are to give such licence to the abbess that she may receive as sisters the women who flee from the world, being on that account suitable and fit according to the substance of the Rules and Manner of Life. We order further, according to the words of Pope Innocent IV, that to every one who deserves to be received, and before she shall change her attire and enter into the religion, shall be clearly told all the hard things and bitter through which one goes to God; and also all that which in this religion it will be necessary for her to observe, in order that she may not afterwards excuse herself under pretext of ignorance. Moreover, we desire that no one be received who is not qualified and capable of the observance of this life and rule, either because of too great age, or because of some infirmity, or because of a foolish simplicity, because through such persons the rigour of the Rule and its observance becomes frequently relaxed and disordered.

Further, we desire and ordain that, concerning the persons who are to be received into the Order, the sisters hold and observe this custom, which is: when any one

<sup>1</sup> By this is meant the present declaration of the convents subject to the government of the Regulars, because if they are to be subject to the government of the Bishop, to him or to his Vicar will it appertain to give such licence.



is to be received, they shall send for advice to a few persons, fearful of God and lovers of the poor, outside the Order,<sup>1</sup> according to whose counsel shall be given to the poor the goods of her who is received; but according to the Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. XVI, this may only be done two months before the profession.

And let the abbess and all the other sisters beware that, neither for themselves nor for others, they receive in any manner whatsoever anything of the possessions of the one who enters, as is the will of the Rule in Chap. II, and of the Sacred Council of Trent in the same place, in order that those who judge others by outward things shall not be obliged to judge them with a sinister eye, unless the novice of her own accord wish to give to the sisters as alms as to other poor a few things to alleviate and succour their urgent necessity; and this according as it shall proceed from her own will, seeing that the rule and manner of life demand that she who enters shall be free, and shall do with her belongings as God shall inspire her. Let the abbess and all the sisters again beware that in receiving to the Order they act in any way for themselves, or permit others to make any agreement whatsoever with regard to the temporal goods of such a reception, in whom can be noted any species of simony.

Neither is it permitted to her who enters to reserve anything in the world; but, entirely divested of things terrestrial, let her offer herself free to the cross.

And if perchance it should happen that the novice cannot in any way distribute her goods to the poor before her profession, being prevented by worthy considerations and urgent reasonable cause, she shall leave the distribu-

<sup>1</sup> The present Constitution is intended for those who have absolute power over their own affairs, because for the others it will be enough to make the renunciation of theirs according to the form of the Holy Council of Trent.



tion of her goods to some person fearing God, who in her place shall give them to the poor.

And in order that the sisters, in accepting into the Order women who flee from the world, may proceed in a well-ordered manner and without error, we ordain that no one be received to this rule and manner of life unless it be clearly seen that she comes principally to religion to serve God and to save her soul, moved, urged and conducted in this desire by the Holy Spirit, and not constrained by the threats of relatives, or by other corporal necessity, from living in the world.

We ordain, further, that the novice, before she attires herself, be examined according to the Rule in the beginning of Chap. II. And also let it be seen to that she be examined by the Bishop or his Vicar, as is commanded in the Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. XVII, before the profession.

Therefore let the abbess not omit, at least a month before the profession, to give notice of it to the Bishop or his Vicar. Besides this, we desire that women stained by any public disgrace, unsound in body or in mind, suspected of some fault, or who have debts, shall not in any manner be received into the Order. And should by chance the novice be excommunicated or prohibited, let her, before she take the dress and as soon as possible, be absolved from such censure by suitable methods; and this can be done in virtue of the privileges conceded to the Order of the Minor Brothers and of St. Clare. With this, however, that she shall know that in returning to the world without making her profession she shall fall under the same censure as that from which she was absolved at her entry.

The novice, if being otherwise than in a free position, must be received with the permission of her master or mistress.

And no one shall be received before they are eighteen years of age, although the Council of Trent, Sec. 25,

Chap. XV, concedes that profession may be made when the sixteenth year is passed—because the weight of religion and the harshness of our life could not be borne earlier than that.

We ordain, further, that no one be received as a nun of the choir who is over twenty-five years of age, excepting such who are so far able to read that, without great trouble on their part or on that of others, they are able to learn to say the Divine Office. And no one shall make profession if she cannot say the Divine Office competently by herself or at least with others.

No one is to be received who is over forty years of age, unless she be a very singular person, and unless by her reception great edification accrue to the people and to the church; she being, however, of such health and vigour that she may be able to bear the weight and harshness of the Order.

Besides this, no one professing another Order shall be received without the permission of her abbess, unless beyond that she were privileged by the Apostolic Seat.

And we declare, further, that, should any novice be in doubt as to whether, on account of some impediment or reasonable cause, she should make her profession, when the year of probation is over, the time of such profession may be deferred at the will of the superior, with the consent of the novice, as has been declared by the Most Eminent Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation above the Council of Trent; but in such a case the abbess must declare in public, the nuns being present, that the novice, although the year is over, does not acquire any right whatever to the Order, nor is to be considered professed, until the cause (or impediment) being determined with mature deliberation, and the voice of the nuns being taken, she shall make solemn profession in the hands of the superior according to the custom of the Order; and the same declaration must be made to the novice.

Further, we desire that the reception of the novices





CHOIR AT BULLINGHAM, SHOWING SCREEN.



into the convent and to the profession shall take place in Chapter, all the sisters being present, especially called and convoked.

The Manner which is to be observed in clothing the novices by the sisters who live according to the First Rule of St. Clare and Reform of the Blessed Colletta.

In clothing the novices this manner is to be observed—

Firstly, the said novice must have made a general confession, and have been absolved from all such excommunications and ecclesiastical censure as through the privileges conceded by the most high Pontiffs to the Order she may be absolved from. And if there being no impediment and she appearing fit for the Order, and they being desirous of clothing her, the ceremony shall take place in the morning; they shall place the clothes prepared for her before the altar before the priest begins Mass; and if it shall take place at another time of the day, it does not matter so that the clothes have been placed before the altar.

And, the Mass being over, the novice shall come to the screen, together with all the nuns; and the superior, or some other of the Order who is to dress her, standing behind the screen, shall, if it seem good to him, discourse to her on the contempt of the world, of the advantages of religion, or else of the perfection of that state into which she is about to enter, and of the conditions and purpose and fervour which are therein to be sought for—or of other similar things.

And, this being done, the one who is to attire the novice, having the authority of absolution according to our privileges, may, if it seem good to him, absolve her from her sins, for greater security, particularly if she have not been absolved from them in the sacramental confession made beforehand; wherefore the novice, kneeling before the screen and holding a lighted candle in her

hand, shall say the Confiteor Deo, etc. And he who is to attire her shall give her absolution, saying—

Misereatur tui omnipotens Deus, et dimissis omnibus peccatis tuis perducatur te ad vitam æternam.

*R.* Amen.

*V.* Indulgentiam, absolutionem, et remissionem omnium peccatorum tuorum tribuat tibi omnipotens et misericors Dominus.

*R.* Amen.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by His great compassion and by the merits of His most holy Passion, absolve thee and fill thee with His grace; and I, by the authority of the privileges and by the grace conceded to this Order by the most high Pontiffs, do absolve thee from every sentence of excommunication, great or less, if thou hast fallen under any such, and from any prohibition, if to such thou hast been subjected; and I restore thee to the sacraments of the most Holy Mother Church and to all lawful practices. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

After giving the absolution, the priest shall bless the vestments, saying—

Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.

*R.* Qui fecit cælum et terram.

*V.* Sit nomen Domini benedictum.

*R.* Ex hoc nunc, et usque in sæculum.

*V.* Domine exaudi orationem meam.

*R.* Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

*V.* Dominus vobiscum.

*R.* Et cum spiritu tuo.

*Oremus.*

Deus Pater omnipotens, qui per legiferum Moysen famulum tuum ministris Ecclesiæ sub typo passionis priscae legis præceptor dedisti; hoc genus indumenti, quod SS. Patres nostri S. Franciscus, et S. Clara, et alii

## THE RULE OF THE POOR CLARES 75

Ecclesiæ Sanctæ Ministri ad innocentiam et humilitatis initium sorores abrenunciantes sæculo ferre sanxerunt; ita benedicere † et sanctificare digneris, ut hæc Ancilla tua, quæ ea cupit induere, exuta ab omni sorde vitiorum, cum indumentis sanctarum virtutum ea induatur; quatenus ab omni perturbatione callidi insidiatoris deinceps protecta, in Ecclesia tua sancta de die in diem renovetur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

And, the Benediction being pronounced, the clothes shall be sprinkled with holy water, and when this is done the following prayer shall be said over the novice—

### *Oratio.*

Deus, qui in Abrahæ famuli tui opere, humano generi obedientiæ exemplar præbuiisti; concede huic famuliæ tuæ, et suæ voluntatis pravitatem frangere, et tuorum præceptorum rectitudinem in omnibus adimplere. Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

### *Oremus.*

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, respice propitius ad preces Ecclesiæ tuæ, et huic Ancillæ tuæ, quam ad novam gratiam vocare dignatus es; concede Domine, ut sit in ea simplex affectus, et fortis obedientia perseverandi, pax perpetua, mens pura, rectum et mundum cor, voluntas bona, conscientia sancta, compunctio spiritualis, virtus animæ, vita immaculata, consummatio irreprehensibilis; ut viriliter currens, in tuum introire regnum feliciter mereatur. Qui vivis, et regnas in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

And, the prayers being said, holy water shall be sprinkled over the novice. Afterwards the said novice shall kneel before the abbess, and they shall cut off her hair. And while they are cutting it they shall say the R. Regnum mundi, et omnem ornatum sæculi contempni,

propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi, repeating the same until it is cut off. And, this being honestly done, they shall commence to undress her, and with every garment that they take off they shall say : The Lord put off from thee the old Adam, with all his works. Amen. And, having done this, they shall immediately clothe her with the consecrated garments, and with every garment that they put on they shall say : The Lord clothe thee with a new being, which, like unto God, shall be created in justice, truth and holiness ; and at the end they shall reply : Amen. And, the novice being clad, the abbess shall begin the Psalm : *Levavi oculos meos in montes*, which being ended they shall say : *Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison.*

*Kyrie eleison. Pater noster.*

*Et ne nos inducas, etc.*

*V. Salvam fac ancillam tuam.*

*R. Deus meus sperantem in te.*

*V. Mitte eam auxilium de sancto.*

*R. Et de Syon tuere eam.*

*V. Domine exaudi orationem meam, etc.*

#### *Oremus.*

Domine Jesu Christe pastor bone, qui animam tuam pro ovibus posuisti ; fac hanc Ancillam tuam sacro habitu indutam, ante conspectum tuum cum justitia vivere, et ad misericordiam tuam cum fructu bonorum operum pervenire concede ; tribueque ei in fide obedientiam, in labori virtutem, in affectu devotionem, in actu prosperitatem, in victu sufficientiam, in pace lætitiā, in conversatione gratiam, in tribulatione patientiam, in languoribus sanitatis tuæ medicinam ; quatenus in hoc præsentī tempore per semitam justitiæ cum felicitate percurrat ; ut te venturum judicem in novissimo die cum magna hilaritate suscipiat.

*Qui cum Patre, etc.*

After the prayer, the abbess, or whoever dresses her,



shall begin the hymn, *Veni creator Spiritus*, which being ended she shall say the following versicles and prayers—

*V. Confirma hoc Deus, quod operatus es in nobis.*

*R. A templo sancto tuo, quod est in Hierusalem.*

*V. Post partum Virgo inviolata permansisti.*

*R. Dei genetrix intercede pro nobis.*

*V. Ora pro nobis Beate Pater Franciscæ.*

*R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.*

*V. Ora pro nobis Beata Clara.*

*R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.*

*V. Orate pro nobis omnes Sancti et Sanctæ Dei.*

*R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.*

*V. Domine exaudi orationem meam.*

*R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.*

#### *Oratio.*

Deus, qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti; da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere.

Concede nos famulos tuos quæsumus Domine Deus, perpetua mentis et corporis sanitate gaudere, et gloriosa Beatæ Mariæ semper Virginis intercessionem, à præsentem liberari tristitia, et æterna perfrui lætitia. Deus, qui Ecclesiam tuam beati Francisci meritis factu novæ proles amplificas; tribue nobis, ex ejus imitatione terrena despiciere, et cælestium gaudiorum semper participatione gaudere.

Famulos tuos, quæsumus, Domine Beatæ Virginis tuæ Claræ votivam commemorationem recensentes, cælestium gaudiorum sua facias interventionem participes, et tui Unigeniti cohæredes.

Omnes Sancti tui, quæsumus, Domine, nos ubique adjuvent; ut dum eorum merita recolimus, patrocinia sentiamus, Per Christum Dominum, etc.

And, this being done, the novice shall be conducted to embrace all the nuns in order, beginning with the abbess.

Afterwards the novice, returning to the screen, shall kneel down, and the one who has clothed her shall bestow on her another name, or shall confirm the one that she has ; and if it seem well to him, he may address her and explain to her the great mysteries and meaning which are in the things and in the ceremonies just ended, and particularly in the cutting of the hair and the change of garment, and in the alteration of the name. And, this being done, the one who has dressed her shall consign her and recommend her to the mistress who is to instruct her in spiritual things, in the religious life, and in the observance of the Rule, constitution and ceremonies of the Order, etc.

Further, we ordain, when any one is received as a novice, that when she is dressed all her hair shall be cut from her head in a circle above the ears, and shall not thenceforward in any manner be kept long ; but at certain times in the year, according as the abbess shall command, all the sisters shall do likewise, unless, because of some weakness of the head, it is judged unwise.

#### The Manner and Form of the Profession of the Sisters of St. Chiara of the First Rule, and Reform of the Blessed Colletta.

In the profession of the sisters this manner is to be observed—

The novice must have made the general confession, and have the votes and be fit for the Order and able to observe the Rule, knowing all that she has to promise. And, there being no other impediment, the veil shall be placed above the altar, on the day when she wishes to make her profession, while Mass is being said and until it is ended, if this can be conveniently done, and if not, it does not matter ; but after Mass, or at some other convenient time, she who wishes to make the profession, together with all the nuns, shall come to the screen, and the confessor or superior, standing on the other side of the screen, shall give her a few good admonitions, saying—

My daughter, dost thou wish to make profession? Hast thou thought well about all this? Hast thou thought (pondered on) of that which thou hast to promise? Will thy courage, with the grace of God, suffice thee in its observance? Dost thou make this profession freely and spontaneously? Art thou eighteen years of age? Dost thou wish for more time to prove thyself and to think on these things? and other similar words.

If the novice answer satisfactorily she shall kneel, with a lighted candle in her hand, before the screen, where all the nuns shall stand who are able to come; and the novice (if this appear good to the superior who is present) shall say: *Il Confiteor*; and he shall give her absolution, as it is appointed in the attiring of the novices, saying—

*Misereatur tui, etc. Indulgentiam, etc. Our Lord Jesus Christ by His, etc.*

This being done, the novice shall draw near, and shall turn towards the abbess, and kneeling with her body, but with her mind raised to God, let her clasp her hands, placing them in the hands of the abbess, and say with her own mouth the words of the profession, which are—

I, Sister N., vow and promise to God Almighty, and to Mary always Virgin, and to St. Francis, to St. Clare, and to all the saints, and to thee, Mother, to serve all the days of my life the rule and life of the Poor Sisters of St. Clare, to her given by the same St. Francis, and approved by Pope Innocent IV, living in obedience, without possessions, and in chastity, and serving the convent as ordained by the constitution of the Order.

And the abbess who receives her shall promise to her and say—

And I, through Almighty God, if thou observe these things, promise thee eternal life.

And all the surrounding sisters shall reply: *Amen*.

Afterwards the novice shall kneel before the screen, holding a lighted candle; and he who receives her shall bless the veils, saying—



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*V.* Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini.

*R.* Qui fecit cœlum et terram.

*V.* Sit nomen Domini benedictum.

*R.* Ex hoc nunc et usque in sæculum.

### *Oratio.*

Domine Jesu Christe, qui tegmen nostræ mortalitatis induere dignatus es; obsecramus immensam tuæ largitatis abundantiam, ut hoc genus velaminis, quod Sanctus Pater Franciscus, et Sancti Patres ad innocentiae, et humilitatis indicium, abrenunciantibus sæculo sororibus fieri sanxerunt; ut ita benedicere, † et sanctificare / et digneris; ut hæc famula tua, quæ hoc fuerit usa, te mereatur induere. Qui vivis, etc.

### *Oremus.*

Deus, qui per coæternum filium tuum cuncta creasti; quique Mundum peccatis inveteratum, per mysterium sanctæ Incarnationis ejus renovare dignatus es; te suppliciter exoramus, ut ejusdem Domini nostri Jesu Christi meritis, Spiritus sancti gratiam super hanc famulam tuam, abrenunciationem sæculi profitentem, clementer infundere digneris; per quam in spiritu suam mentem renovare, veterem hominem cum suis actibus exuere, et novum, qui secundum Deum creatus est, induere mereatur. Per eundem Christum, etc.

Then the priest shall sprinkle the veil with holy water.

And, this being done, the priest, or two sisters, shall begin the following Litany—

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Christe audi nos.

Christe exaudi nos.

Pater de Cœlis Deus, mis.

Fili Redemptor mundi Deus, mis.



Spiritus Sancte Deus, mis.

Sancta Trinitas unus Deus, mis.

Sancta Maria, ora pro ea.

Omnes Sancti Beatorum spirituum ordines, orate.

Omnes Sancti Apostoli, et Evangelistæ, orate.

Sancte Francisco, ora.

Omnes Sancti Confessores, orate.

Santa Clara, ora.

Sancta Elizabeth, ora.

Omnes Sanctæ Virgines, et Viduæ, orate.

Propitius esto, parce ei Domine.

Ab omni malo, libera eam Dom.

Per mysterium Sanctæ Incarnationis, Passionis, Resurrectionis, et Ascensionis tuæ, libera eam Domine.

Peccatores, te rogamus.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, exaudi nos Domine.

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Kyrie eleison.

Christe eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Pater noster.

V. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem.

R. Sed libera nos a malo.

V. Salvam fac Ancillam tuam.

R. Deus meus sperantem in te.

V. Mitte eam Domine auxilium de Sancto.

R. Et de Syon tuere eam.

V. Esto ei Domine turris fortitudinis.

R. A facie inimici.

V. Nihil proficiat inimicus in ea.

R. Et filius iniquitatis non apponat nocere eam.

V. Domine exaudi orationem meam.

R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.

V. Dominus vobiscum.

R. Et cum Spiritu tuo.

*Oremus.*

Adesto Domine supplicationibus nostris, et hanc famulam tuam, cui in tuo sancto nomine velum sacræ Religionis imponimus benedicere et dignes; et per intercessionem Beatissimæ et gloriosissimæ Virginis Mariæ, et Beatorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli, atque Beati Francisci et Beatæ Claræ, et aliorum Sanctorum; facias à vanitate sæculi veraciter converti, et in observantiam hujus propositi certatim fervere; ut in tribulationibus, tentationibus, et angustiis indeficientem facias permanere, tua vera consolatione valeat respirare; et juste, et pie, casteque, per veram humilitatem, et obedientiam, in fraterna charitate fundata, quod te donante hodie promittit, foelicibus perseverantiis compleat, et ad vitam pervenire mereamur æternam. Qui cum Deo Patre, etc.

Immediately the priest or one of the sisters shall begin : *Veni Creator.* And while they are singing the hymn, the priest shall place the veils on her through the little window where it is customary to communicate, saying : *Accipe Ancilla Christi, sancta Velamina proffessionis tuæ sacrum signaculum in perpetuum, cum quo feliciter valeas pervenire ad Regna Cœlorum. Per Christum Dominum, etc.*

And, this being done, the professed novice shall embrace all the sisters, beginning with the abbess, and afterwards shall return to the screen; and he who has received her shall admonish her to persevere unto the end, and shall consign the said novice to the abbess, saying : *I recommend to thee this Bride of Christ, that she may be kept until the Day of Judgment without stain in the sight of the Most High King; and if at the Day of Judgment, through any fault or negligence of thine, she has not been properly instructed, thou wilt have to give a strict account thereof to the Supreme Judge, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.*

Everything being finished, he who receives the novice to the profession shall say : *Confirma hoc Deus, with the*

other verses and prayers as above. All the prayers being ended, the novice shall give thanks to all the nuns for having deigned to receive her to the profession and to the Order; and the superior shall admonish her to acknowledge so great a kindness.

## CHAPTER II—OF THE QUALITY OF THE HABIT AND THE CLOTHES.

The Rule says at the end of Chap. II : I beg, admonish and exhort all my sisters to dress themselves always in vile garments. We ordain that the vileness of the clothes shall appear in the price and likewise in the colour; and although the same Rule in the same chapter says that the abbess shall allow the one who wishes to enter, (she having resigned the secular garment,) three tunics and the cloak; notwithstanding, should the necessity or infirmity or condition of the person, or the nature of the place or time, compel some to have more than three tunics, we declare that the abbess, with the advice of discreet persons, may provide them suitably—because the Rule in the aforesaid chapter has these words : But the abbess shall provide clothes for them discreetly, according to the nature of the persons, places and seasons, and according to the necessity of cold countries. But here it must be noted that the three tunics spoken of in the Rule must not be of the same scope and kind, because the two interior tunics are meant, not for the form of the dress of the Order, but for necessity and modesty of the body. And it is not needful that they be of the same colour. Therefore we desire and ordain that the exterior tunic, which is the one worn outside and above, shall be called the Habit of the Order, without which it is not lawful for the sisters to go out in public, neither to sleep without the same, unless, on account of infirmity or weakness, or other manifest necessity, the abbess or her vicaress, with the



consent of the majority of the discreet ones, shall judge it better to do otherwise. The length of the habit shall be such that, being worn, it shall not be longer than the one who wears it. And whenever the tunic is of the length of the dress it can serve as a habit. The width is not to exceed the measure of fourteen spans; the sleeves are not to go below the length of the hands. The tunic must be of humble cloth, but it must not be lined with fur. The cloak also must be always of vile and coarse cloth, not gathered at the neck, nor indecently long. And always and in every garment of the sisters let there appear and shine forth vileness, austerity and poverty, in the form, in the cost and in the colour. All the sisters, as well as the abbess and the other officials, shall be dressed with a like cloth, and every partiality shall be avoided. The cord which is the girdle of the sisters shall be common, simple and far from any rarity. As to the covering of the head, we ordain that all the sisters, the abbess as well as the others, who are professed, shall without any difference bind their heads with all humility, modesty and piety, thus removing all curiosity and vanity. And in order that this shall be the better observed by the sisters in every convent and place, we ordain that the piece of cloth shall be bound in such a manner that the forehead, with both cheeks and the chin, shall be for the greater part covered in such a way that the face cannot in any manner be completely seen. And the veils and pieces of cloth which are put on the head and around the neck shall be fashioned in such a manner that the whole of the head, the breast and the shoulders shall be for the greater part covered. We desire, further, that all the veils and cloths shall be of common, simple and coarse material, so that there shall always shine forth in them the holy poverty and austerity of their profession. Nevertheless, we allow that each of the sisters, with the licence of her abbess, may have two black veils and two or three white cloths to change, that cleanliness may be always observed. And let the sisters



keep themselves in every way from having their clothes frilled, or of silk or other costly stuff. Finally, no novice may wear a black veil before the formal profession, unless she have professed in another Order, but shall wear white cloths, bound in a suitable manner, according as the abbess shall dispose, and according to the usual manner.

### CHAPTER III—OF THE DIVINE OFFICE.

As for the Divine Office, whether by night or by day, in order that it may be said in the choir in such a manner as to be pleasing to the majesty of God, we ordain that at the beginning of every canonical hour, immediately after the first signal, all the sisters, unless excused for a legitimate reason by the abbess or her vicarress, shall meet together in the choir to prepare their minds for the Lord, and shall stay there without smiling, without murmuring or vain discourse, and without curious and vague glances; in silence, in peace, and with becoming gravity and reverence let them unitedly persist until the end. And let no one presume to leave the choir while the Divine Office is being said without the permission of the abbess or her vicarress, or whoever at that time is the chief, until the whole of the Divine Office is finished.

Again we exhort the same sisters in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that always and in every place they say the Divine Office, entirely, attentively, clearly and religiously; beginning together, pausing together, and persevering in unity to the end in such a manner that the Office of the Lord shall be said in a higher key and with more pauses than that of the Madonna or of the Dead.

As to the manner of ringing for Mass, or at the canonical hours, and as to the manner of sitting, of kneeling, of bowing, of rising, and as to how the sisters shall stand with regard to one another; let this always be done according to the practice and decree of their own superiors

and according to the convenience of the persons and of the places. No sister who is able to read, whatever her situation, shall be absent from the choir ; but all the sisters shall be obliged to attend Mass and at every canonical hour, except those who are actually infirm and those who are waiting on the infirm at that time with permission of the abbess or of her vicaress ; and, further, with the exception of those who at the same time are occupied in the common service of the convent, with the permission, will and order of the abbess ; but the officials shall endeavour to use such diligence in the expedition of their offices and services, that these being finished they may together with the others recite the Divine Office in church.

The sisters who are not able to read and who are not occupied in the services of the others, shall likewise come to church to say their Paternoster and their Office, to which they are compelled by the Rule in Chap. III, in some place separated for this purpose and assigned to them. And if the abbess or vicaress shall find that any of the sisters are negligent in this matter, she shall punish her suitably, according to the nature of the offence ; and in saying the Office, the Rubric of the Roman Breviary is to be observed. We ordain further, that at the time of a general interdict the sisters shall conform to the Church ; provided that the interdict has been legitimately denounced to them by those to whom it appertains, or by certain of their messengers or by letter. Then the sisters, the doors being barred, and those prohibited and excommunicated being banished from the church, shall say the Divine Office in the manner in which the Office of the Madonna is usually said on ordinary days, not sitting, but standing upright, as is the custom. And if at the time of the prohibition any of the sisters or the confessor of the convent should fall ill, the Holy Communion shall be given to them ; and if they die they shall be buried with great quiet, those pro-

hibited and excommunicated being first banished, with this, however, that nothing belonging to the Burial Service or to the Communion shall be left out. And because prayer is very necessary in the service of God for those who really wish to lead the spiritual life, in order to unite themselves with God in their hearts and to make progress in the holy virtues; therefore the sisters must endeavour to pray at all times, and to remain as much as possible with their minds raised to God. Nevertheless it is ordained to this end, that two special hours shall be set aside each day during the whole year, one in the evening immediately after evening prayers, and the other from Easter week until the Nativity of the Madonna in the morning immediately after Mass; from the Nativity of the Madonna until Easter, after Matins; and in the morning after the Office and before Mass shall be said the Litanies, calling on all the saints, who for our aid are near to the Lord. And in the evening, after evensong, those of the glorious Virgin shall be said. And in order to subdue the flesh and that it may not resist the Spirit, and in memory of the most bitter Passion, and chiefly of the cruel flagellation of our most sweet Saviour, it is ordained that the sisters shall use the discipline on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, in the evening immediately after prayers, during the whole year, and shall say the Miserere, the De profundis and the antiphon *Christus factus est*, with the Orazioni Respice, and afterwards the *Salve Regina*, with five devout prayers.

#### CHAPTER IV—OF ABSTINENCE.

Although, according to the Rule in Chap. III, the sisters must fast at all times, we declare, notwithstanding, that in times of manifest necessity the sisters are not bound to corporal fasting. And since they are obliged to



fast at all times of the year, they must consequently abstain in all places from eating meat, unless they are ill and have permission, therefore, from the doctor, in whose absence the abbess in case of necessity may allow a simple meat broth to the sisters. But from the Forty Days of All Saints, from Holy Friday and the Vigils commanded by Holy Church onwards, they may eat milk food, through the concession of Pope Eugene IV, and although in the said Rule is contained this clause, that at the Nativity of the Lord, on whatever day it may fall, the sisters may eat twice; nevertheless, we declare that because of this, meat is not allowed to them on that day; neither on Sundays, on which days they may also eat twice; and also on the Sundays in Lent, according to the use and custom of the Holy Mother Church; but still, never meat, not even on the said days.

Further, it is contained in the above-mentioned Chap. III of the Rule, that the abbess shall dispense the weak as it seems best to her. Concerning the which it is to be noted that in such dispensation it is not usually easy to exactly determine the necessity of the age and of the weakness; since it frequently happens that some are stronger at thirteen years of age than others of sixteen, and some suffer more through a brief and slight illness than others through a long and serious one.

Wherefore, we exhort them in Christ that they be prudent in these things, and that according to God and a right conscience the charity of Christ shine through them rather than a too indiscreet austerity. But in such a manner that it shall not be very easy to exempt without real necessity, because very often great relaxations are made on account of such dispensations.

The abbess or her vicaress may, therefore, with the consent of the greater part of the discreet, exempt such weak and infirm ones, and allow them to eat two or three times a day, when a just and real cause calls for it; for whom, according to the necessity or weakness, as much



in the matter of eating as in other things, provision shall be made according to the necessity. We ordain, further, that the abbess shall take anxious care that of the alms given to the convent, there shall be provided in common to the sisters, according to the quality of the said alms, a sufficiency of things necessary; so that they shall not have occasion to desist from the holy enterprise upon which they have entered on account of the want and deficiency of provision in the matter of food, clothes and other necessary things.

#### CHAPTER V—OF CONFESSION, COMMUNION AND CONFESSOR.

In order that purity of heart may reign in the sisters of this Order, and that fervour and love for the most Holy Body of Christ our Lord may grow more and more every day, and be greatly kindled; we desire and ordain that besides the number quoted in the Rule, which is that the sisters must confess twelve times in the year with the permission of the abbess, and besides the number determined on by the Holy Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. X, which ordains that all the sisters shall at least once a month make a confession of their sins, and take the most Holy Body of the Lord; that each of the sisters, unless she be justly hindered, shall confess twice a week, besides the seven times contained in the Rule, and shall ordinarily communicate twice a week in the Mass by the hand of the confessor. We desire, further, and command in the name of obedience, that no sister, no matter what her position, shall dare to confess to any other confessor, whether regular or secular, whatever his condition, rank, or dignity, neither under any pretext of grace or privilege conceded to one or the other, but alone shall confess to the confessor of the convent.

It is conceded, however, according to the determination

of the Holy Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. X, that they may confess two or three times a year to a confessor extraordinary, deputed by the superior of the convent; but the same must offer himself and not be asked for by the nuns.

#### CHAPTER VI—OF THE ENCLOSURE.

All the professed sisters who have promised to observe this manner of life and rule, must observe perpetual enclosure; and it shall not any longer be lawful for them, neither shall permission or facility be conceded to them during the whole of their life to go outside the enclosure of their convent, unless it be to the end of edifying, raising, or reforming some convent of the same Order; or in order to escape from some grave inconvenience; and this with the express permission of the Bishop, according to the Sacred Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. V, and in obedience to the minister-general of the Order of the Minor Brothers, or to the provincial minister of that province where their convent is built. And when it shall happen that any of the sisters are sent outside the enclosure of their convent in the abovesaid manner, we desire and ordain that they be accompanied by persons just and fearful of God, and that they go as quickly as possible to the other convent assigned to them. And when it is necessary for them to converse with secular persons, or those belonging to an Order of either sex, let them remember to mortify themselves, speaking humbly, and conversing modestly with all, as is proper for the sisters and daughters of St. Clare.

Similarly, we ordain that a very strong rota shall be made in every convent, of sufficient height and breadth, and arranged in such a manner that no person can see inside the convent through its openings; and that the sisters can in no way see anything outside. Through the

which rota things necessary may be received which are sent to them as alms. And should it happen that such things were of such a length and breadth that they are not able to be conveniently received by way of the rota, then they may be received at the gate of the convent. And the same may be said of things which it is necessary to send out of the convent.

Similarly, for greater safety and honesty, as much for the nuns as for the convent, we ordain that in no convent of this Order more than one parlour shall be allowed, within which two black curtains shall be nailed up so that the sisters can neither see nor be seen; nor more than one grille, which shall alone be used in preaching to the sisters—when the Chapter is assembled, and for interviewing the girls who are to be received; inside of which grille shall be hung a black cloth, which can be raised in order to see the girls. And once again there shall not be more than one rota or one gate, which shall be made in public places and in the usual form.

Similarly, we ordain that at the inside boundary of the convent, opposite to the principal gate, another gate shall be made, with a strong lock, like the principal gate, and disposed and arranged in such a manner that the sisters are in no way able to go to or draw near to the principal gate; and strangers standing outside cannot, on account of the obstacle presented by this second gate, either see or hear the sisters speak through the openings of the first door, if by chance any were there.

Likewise, we desire that the gates of the kitchen garden and of the dormitory shall be always firmly and strongly locked at night.

And in order that the sisters may be still more secure, we ordain that none of them may send outside any letter whatever, either closed or open, neither for themselves or for any other person through the rota, or through any other place, no matter what the position or office of the sister. And similarly we desire that neither by the above



methods and road may any letter be received, opened, or read if it have not been first presented to the abbess' or her vicaress' own hand; the which letters presented in this way must be first read by the abbess or her vicaress before being sent or received by the sisters. And after such letters as are to be sent outside the convent have been read by the abbess or her vicaress, they shall seal them, and having sealed them, they themselves shall give them, or cause them to be given, to the chief portress. And should it by chance happen that the abbess or her vicaress should find in the said letters anything which ought not to be written or received, they shall in nowise give them to the sisters to whom they have been sent, nor send them out of the convent; and the sisters who have written such letters shall be severely punished. Neither is it allowed to the sisters to give any letter into the hand of any person whatsoever who is to take it out of the convent.

Likewise, no abbess may read any letter which has been sent to her, nor may she write or send letters away from the convent if they have not been first shown to one of the discreet sisters, delegated to this office by the other discreet ones, and who every year must change, another being put in her place; the which letters the said discreet one must read before they are received by the abbess, and having read the letters which the abbess wishes to send away, the discreet one must seal them herself, and they may thus be sent from the convent.

#### CHAPTER VII—OF THE ELECTION OF THE MOTHER ABBESS, OFFICIALS AND DISCREET.

Although the Rule says that the sisters shall send for the general or provincial minister of the Order of Minor Brothers, in order that he may exhort the said



sisters with fervour and ardent words to consider the harmony and common good of the Order in the election which is to be made of the abbess.

Considering, nevertheless, the multitude of business of the said brothers, and how great and continuous are the occupations alike of the minister-general and of the provincial minister concerning the government and care of their subjects, we ordain that if on account of some business they are unable to come, this charge may be committed to the confessor or other father who shall be judged suitable for this office.

And when they wish to assemble the Chapter for the election of their prelates, they shall follow the same order as that still followed by the Cappucin Brothers.

Firstly, the visitor, or vicar, or others sent by them, shall make the visitation to the sisters about this time, that is, a few days before the Chapter is to be assembled, and the sisters shall offer up continuous and fervent prayers, imploring God that He will deign to dispose all things for the honour of His Majesty and for their good. And besides this, at this time particularly, of which we are speaking and which is ordained for the assembly of the Chapter, the sisters shall not go about talking or whispering either directly or indirectly to one another, but shall allow the Holy Spirit to work; therefore be ye advised to go into every election in purity, simplicity, holiness and saintliness, and without strife; but united together in charity and peace ye shall elect her whom ye know to be best for the salvation of souls and good of the convent; manifesting therein that under pain of mortal sin, at every canonical election, she is to be elected who shall be known to be best and most efficient for the post which she is to fill, every other consideration being put aside. And in order that the sisters may be the more united by the will of God and that they may know it more perfectly, on that morning on which the Chapter is to be assembled, let all the sisters

endeavour to communicate, if they are able, and on that morning the Mass of the Holy Spirit shall be said.

And this being done, all the sisters shall be called by the ringing of the bell, and shall come to the grille; and the prelate or examiner, standing on the other side of the grille, shall give them the sermon, and shall speak of the election which is to be made and of its importance; and shall exhort them with the words of God to all possible harmony and peace, and to the common good in the election of the abbess and in all other things. And they shall be advised to observe that which is commanded by the Holy Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. VII, namely, that the sister who is to be elected as abbess, shall be not less than forty years of age, and that since her profession she shall have remained and lived in the convent for at least eight years an exemplary life; and when there is no sister in the convent with these qualifications, then with the consent and express will of the superior, by whose authority the Chapter has been assembled, and who must preside at the election, another may be elected, who shall be at least thirty years of age, and who, since her profession, has been a good example in the convent for at least five years. This being done, let them invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit, saying the hymn "Veni creator Spiritus," and at the end the prelate shall say—

*V. Emitte spiritum tuum, et creabuntur.*

*R. Et renovabis faciem terræ.*

*V. Domine exaudi orationem meam.*

*R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.*

*V. Dominus vobiscum.*

*R. Et cum spiritu tuo.*

*Oremus.*

Deus, qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti; da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere.

Concede nos famulos tuos, quæsumus Domine Deus, perpetua mentis, et corporis sanitate gaudere, et gloriosa Beatæ Mariæ semper Virginis intercessione, à præsentis liberari tristitia, et æterna perfrui lætitia.

Deus, qui Ecclesiam tuam Beati Francisci meritis fortunæ prolis amplificas : tribue nobis ex ejus imitatione terrena despicere, et cælestium gaudiorum semper participatione gaudere.

Famulos tuos quæsumus, Domine, beatæ Virginis tuæ Claræ votivam commemorationem recensentes, cælestium gaudiorum suam facias interventione participes, et tui unigeniti coheredes.

Actiones nostras, quæsumus Domine, aspirando præveni, et adjuvando proseguere ; ut cuncta nostra oratio, et operatio, atque electio, à te semper incipiat, et per te cepta finiatur. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

*R. Amen.*

This being said, the abbess shall kneel before the grille and shall confess her sin, and freely and spontaneously shall renounce her office into the hands of him who has called the Chapter, and shall give him the keys and seals through the rota. And this being done, the sisters shall be heard concerning the same, one by one, charging their consciences to tell in charity the defects of the said abbess. And all being heard, the abbess and all the sisters shall be called, and she being come shall kneel down, and the prelate shall tell her her faults, and shall give her the penitence.

And this being done, they shall proceed in the name of God to the election of the new abbess, and the said prelate, according to the Holy Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. VII, together with the confessor or other brother, shall be the examiner, and the sisters shall come to give their vote in all peace and devotion, as become the sisters, servants and brides of Christ. And thus they shall come one by one to the grille, and shall give their



votes freely, declaring the name of that sister whom they elect as their mother abbess, and the superior shall faithfully write down all the votes that are given, so secretly that none of the sisters can hear.

And according to the Holy Council of Trent, Sec. 25, Chap. VI, all this must be done so secretly that the names of the electors can never be published; and when all the votes have been given, all the sisters shall be called to the grille, and the prelate who has been examiner, that is who has taken the votes, shall pronounce the results, beginning with the one who shall have failed to get any, until all are completed; and the one who shall be found to have more than half the votes shall be elected. And if by chance in the first scrutiny no one is elected, they shall take the votes again in the same way until some one be elected, and it is thus necessary to do in every election; and it shall be enough if she have more than half the votes; but it is to be noted that the old abbess shall have no voice in the election of the new one. After she has been elected and the said father has declared the votes, he shall say: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. This is the canonical election of the mother abbess of this convent of . . . celebrated this . . . day of the month of . . . in the year . . . in which the mother, Sister N. in the . . . scrutiny has received . . . votes and I, Brother N., minister-general or provincial or commissary—and if he be not a prelate he shall say examiner—together with my colleague, elect and declare to be elected as the mother abbess of this convent the mother, Sister N., in whose election the greater part of you have consented.

This being said, the *Te Deum Laudamus* shall be sung, after which the prelate shall say the *V. Confirma hoc Deus*, etc., and the following, with the five prayers noted above in Chap I. And this being said, the elected abbess shall kneel in front of the grille, and the said prelate shall



approve and confirm the election, it appearing right to him for approval and confirmation, having been canonically done, and shall say to her : Sister N., I, Brother N., by the authority which I have, do confirm and approve the election made at this Chapter, and I constitute you mother abbess of this convent, and I impose on you and command you, by holy obedience, that you fill the office which has been given to you according to the grace which God has given and shall give to you. And I exhort you with all my power to exercise this charge with all charity and solicitude, not confiding in your own strength, but in that which has elected you to this charge, and which shall give you the grace and light to enable you to govern these sisters, if you will truly commit yourself to it. After this he shall turn to the nuns, and shall say : Further, I command all you sisters, by holy obedience, that you be good daughters and subjects, thinking on that which you have promised in the Rule, in which St. Clare commands you to be obedient in all those things, which are not contrary to conscience and to your Rule ; considering that in this position she is no longer Sister N., but represents St. Clare ; also Christ ; therefore, as I have said, you must reverence and honour her as mother and prelate in all things which belong to her office.

This being done, they shall proceed to choose the vicaress in the same manner, by secret votes, and she who has the greater number of votes, as has been said, shall be elected and declared by the said prelate to be vicaress of the convent, and she shall exercise that office.

Besides this, it is usual and a good custom to choose by secret votes the first and second portress, and also the mistress of the novices.

In the same way, eight sisters of the more discreet shall be elected, according to whose advice the abbess must proceed in all the more important affairs of the convent and according as the Rule directs. But all the other officials shall be chosen by the same prelate, together with

the confessor, abbess and vicaress, who shall confer together and elect those whom they consider most suitable for the charges; because if all these were chosen by vote, not only would it take too long, but it would also become tedious and confusing, neither would the house be well accommodated with officers. But in order not to neglect the Rule which prescribes the Order in this matter, it must be done in this way: The consent and votes shall be taken in common of all the nuns, the prelate saying to all the sisters: Are you content that we shall choose the officers according as the Lord shall inspire us? And if they shall reply, Yes, that they are content, then the prelate, with the confessor, abbess and vicaress, as has been said above, shall endeavour to choose them, accommodating the house to the best of their ability. And the list of the officers being made with all possible charity, according as the Lord shall have inspired them, the said prelate who assembled the Chapter shall send for all the sisters and shall give them a sermon, and shall speak to them of the holy obedience and patience or of other things of the Rule, as it shall appear expedient to him. And the discourse being ended in the name of God, the above list shall be read, and each one, for the love of Jesus Christ, shall take the office which is given to her with patience, as if Christ had sent it to her from heaven, and as He took up the cross for us until He came to the cross.

But in order that this election may proceed with greater safety, we ordain that whenever the death of the abbess shall occur, or if she be oppressed by some long and serious illness, so that she cannot conveniently exercise her office, or if for any just and reasonable cause she wish to renounce her office altogether, or as the Rule says, if it shall appear to the sisters universally that she has transgressed the observance of their life and rule, or (which God forbid) if she be found in some extraordinary fault, then three days after the death or deposition from the office, there being no impediment, the

presence of the superior being possible, or if not, some other ordained by him, the sisters shall provide an abbess by means of a canonical election. In which none of the sisters can be elected as abbess who has not professed, and since the precise profession has not remained and lived in a praiseworthy manner for the space of eight years and who is not less than forty years of age, unless on account of necessity it were needful to act differently with the authority of the superior, as is the wish of the Holy Council of Trent of the Regulars, Sec. 25, Chap. VII, as is said above.

And no one may be elected to such office if she cannot ordinarily lead the common life as prescribed by the Rule in Chap. IV, if she cannot attend the choir day and night, or if she is generally obliged to eat meat. And the same is to be said of the portresses and mistresses of the novices.

#### CHAPTER VIII—OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CHAPTER IS TO BE HELD.

The abbess is obliged according to the Rule to summon her sisters to Chapter at least once a week, and in order that this may be observed in all places and continuously, we ordain that the abbess or her vicarress, according to the nature of the times and of the place, shall fix an hour for holding the said Chapter, so that all the sisters who are strong and healthy can come together at the same time and place; but on this account there shall be nothing omitted which belongs to the Divine Offices or to other necessary services, but every time that the abbess wishes to call her sisters to Chapter, she shall cause the bell of the refectory to be rung one time only; and all the sisters who are healthy and vigorous and who are not then occupied in necessary service to the infirm, must immediately on hearing the sound of the bell assemble for the



Chapter. And all the sisters being congregated there and sitting, the abbess or her vicaress, after having invoked the grace of the Holy Spirit, shall make the general recommendations for the benefactors, alive or dead, naming especially those persons who have given help to her convent with their alms. And these recommendations being made, the sisters shall rise to their feet and shall pray for them in order, saying the Psalm : *Ad te levavi oculos meos*, etc. *Gloria Patri*, etc., for the living, and the Psalm *De profundis*, etc., with the Requiem, etc., for the dead, with the following intercessory prayers, which are—*Paternoster*, etc.

*V. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem.*

*R. Sed libera nos à malo.*

*V. Fiat pax in virtute tua.*

*R. Et abundantia in turribus tuis.*

*V. Memento congregationis tuæ.*

*R. Quam possedisti ab initio.*

*V. Salvas fac servas tuas, et ancillas tuas.*

*R. Deus meus sperantes in te.*

*V. Oremus pro fidelibus defunctibus.*

*R. Requiem æternam dona eis Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.*

*V. Requiescant in pace.*

*R. Amen.*

*V. Domine exaudi orationem meam.*

*R. Et clamor meus ad te veniat.*

### *Oratio.*

*Ecclesiæ tuæ, quæsumus Domine, preces placatus admitte, ut destructis adversitatibus, et erronibus univ ersis, segura tibi serviat libertate.*

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui facis mirabilia magna solus : prætende super famulos tuos, et famulas tuas, et super congregationes illis commissas, spiritum gratiæ salutaris, et ut in veritate tibi complacent, perpetuum eis rorem tuæ benedictionis infunde.



*Prætede Domine famulis, et famulabus tuis benefactoribus nostris dexteram cœlestis auxilii; ut te toto corde perquirant, et quæ digne postulant, consequi mereantur.*

*Absolve quæsumus Domine, animas famulorum, famularumque tuarum, et omnium fidelium defunctorum, ab omni vinculo delictorum; ut in resurrectionis gloria, inter Sanctos, et electos tos resuscitasti respirent. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.*

*R. Amen.*

And at the end the Paternoster being said—

*V. Deus det nobis suam pacem.*

*R. Amen.*

The above prayers and intercessions being then finished, the abbess shall sit down, and one by one each sister shall declare her sins, with a modest and humble voice and clearly, so that they may be heard. And this they shall do with their hands clasped, and kneeling, beginning with the novices and inferiors; and the abbess or her vicaress, having heard their sins and faults, shall give to each one a penance according to the seriousness of the fault committed; and if necessary, shall admonish her and reprimand her, as it shall appear expedient; above all, not showing any partiality whatever.

And let the sisters be warned that in Chapter they may not contend or excuse themselves, neither may they reply. And they shall not speak nor make answer without the permission of the abbess or her vicaress.

The novices, having declared their sins and accepted the penance, shall immediately leave the Chapter, and then the professed sisters shall begin to declare their sins; and they shall not in any way dare to reprove each other for the sins accused and punished in Chapter. And should one of them fall into this sin, she shall be severely punished by the abbess. The Chapter being ended, and the telling as well as the hearing of the sins, if the sisters wish to discuss any matter, let them discuss it as the Rule directs, and let it be dispatched, with becoming

charity, modesty, gravity and honesty : they keeping themselves above all from superfluous, impure and harmful words. And having dispatched everything, they shall leave the Chapter in the name of the Lord, and shall go about the exercise of their offices and shall attend to the amending of their faults and failings.

#### CHAPTER IX—OF SILENCE AND THE MANNER OF SPEAKING AT THE ROTA AND IN THE PARLOUR.

Seeing that silence is the guardian of an understanding spirit and an ornament to a nun, in order that the fervour of devotion be not extinguished through too much talking, we ordain that the sisters be quiet and observe silence, as the Rule dictates, from Evensong until Tierce is said. They shall, further, observe silence, as the same Rule directs, in church, dormitory and in the refectory, when they eat, the infirmary being excepted.

And although the Rule does not order that silence is to be observed in the cloisters ; all the same, since in all well-governed Orders the cloister, after the church, is the first place where silence is to be observed, we ordain that the sisters shall observe silence in the cloisters as in the other three places above mentioned and named in the Rule.

Next, we ordain and command that no sister, no matter what her office, rank or condition, may go to the parlour—as is contained in the said Rule—without the permission of the abbess ; or of the vicaress if it is not possible to ask it of the abbess ; and, besides, having permission, they must speak in the presence of two sisters of the number of the eight discreet of the convent, (and not of the vicaress,) who shall clearly be able to hear what is said. Moreover, no sister, nor abbess or portress, shall begin to speak until those are present who are to listen, unless it be in a case of great necessity.

And none of the sisters shall speak except in conformity to the Rule, with mature and reliable persons, such as father, mother, brothers, sisters, relatives and spiritual friends; and this shall happen very seldom, at the most four times a year. Further, whenever it shall happen that for some necessary reason, any one shall enter the convent and speak with them, they shall modestly cover their faces with black veils, and shall bow themselves a little, as becomes the modesty of the Order.

Moreover, during the forty days of St. Martin, which we desire to begin the day after the festival of All Saints, and to last until the Nativity of the Lord; and during Lent, which we desire shall begin the day after Quinquagesima and last until the Resurrection of the Lord; during these times none of the sisters shall speak to anybody in the parlour or at the rota, except for the reasons comprised in the Rule. And people outside who wish to speak with those in the convent, besides the permission of the superiors in the cases when it is to be sought for, must first of all speak with the abbess or vicarress or portress, being desirous every time, however, of dealing solely with matters appertaining to the common good of the convent, as it has been customary to do until now. Moreover, no person shall write letters during the said time of Lent.

We exhort, further, the same sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ, that whenever it shall happen that one of the sisters shall speak in the parlour or at the rota, she shall keep herself entirely from long, useless, vain and worldly discourses. But let every word that issues from their mouth be honest, useful and edifying, as is becoming to the servants, handmaidens and brides of Christ, observers of the Holy Gospel. And in order to avoid such long and vain conversations and also the doubtful society of men, we ordain, further, that in no manner shall the sisters themselves, or for another person, gossip with either men or women.



## CHAPTER X—OF THE OBSERVANCE OF POVERTY, AND THAT THE SISTERS SHALL NOT RECEIVE ANY POSSESSIONS.

The abdess, together with all the sisters, being held by the Rule to observe the holy poverty, which they have promised to the Lord God and to St. Francis, that is, neither to receive nor to have any possession or property either for themselves or for an intermediate person: therefore we ordain unto all, that they are in no manner to receive houses for letting, land to be worked, meadows for mowing, vineyards for cultivation, nor other houses and lands to be held and possessed.

Besides this, we ordain that the nuns are not to keep granaries, nor to collect or provide dresses which can last more than a year. Likewise, let them know that it is not lawful for them to hoard.

In every way and manner let holy poverty shine forth in the household goods of the sisters. Vessels of gold, of silver or of other precious materials shall not be seen in their convents. Let all rarity be far and banished entirely from their clothes and other necessities. They shall have nothing superfluous, but scarcity in the use of things shall always reign among them, as becomes the followers of the most holy poverty.

As regards legacies made to the sisters in the last testament of those who die, we declare that the nuns of St. Clare, of the First Rule, on account of their profession, are not capable of incomes as legacies for themselves nor for an intermediary person. But of others made simply they are capable, like the Minor Brothers; because Nicholas III in the Chapter *Excit de Verb signif.* in VI, declaring the Rule of the Minor Brothers, says that legacies may be made in three ways. The first is illegal, and is when the testator says in his will that he leaves a quantity of money in rents or places in the hills or other similar investments of which the profits are taken every year in perpetuity, or for a long space



of time ; or he leaves a house to be let, or vineyards for cultivation, or other houses and lands of which the profits are to be taken. A legacy made in such a manner is illegal ; therefore the nuns, on account of their profession, may neither accept it for themselves nor for an intermediary person.

The second way is lawful, and is when the testator says in his will that he leaves a quantity of money, like a hundred crowns, simply as alms, to be paid by the heirs, or that he leaves a house or vineyard or other goods which may be sold by the heirs or other suitable person, and the price of which shall be given as alms to the nuns or convent. A legacy made in such a manner is deemed lawful, therefore the nuns may accept it if they need it, because they are capable of it.

The third way is said to be indifferent, and is when the testator leaves indifferently a quantity of money conveniently, or a house, or vineyard, or other goods without saying or explaining anything in his will. Such a legacy is considered to be made in a lawful manner, according as it suits the nuns ; and therefore they may accept it in that manner in which they become capable of it, as is said above in the second way.

We declare, nevertheless, that it is lawful for every convent in particular to be recommended to and supported in charity—without the convent being under any obligation—by some fraternity or other pious place, from which the sisters may be helped and relieved in the wants and necessities of life and of maintenance, the which fraternity shall have particular care and protection for the said convent, and shall help and defend it in all its needs ; in such a way, however, that they shall not accept perpetual legacies for the convent nor yet house and lands, such as houses and vineyards for letting, and of which the profits are to be taken, seeing that the nuns are not capable of such things, as is contained in Chap. VI of the Rule.

The sisters may, nevertheless, make use of all necessary things conceded to them, according to the Rule, and, further, of those which are not prohibited by the same Rule. They may, therefore, make use of the things necessary for the celebration of the Divine Office for the service of the church, of the altar and of the choir. Moreover, they may make use of the things necessary to the exercise of those offices appointed to them in the convent.

Likewise they may enjoy the use of those things which are liberally offered to them, and sent, or sought after for the love of God; and also of those which they have earned by working, because things offered, begged or earned are not repugnant to nor in discord with their promised poverty.

Besides this, we ordain that when things are sent as alms to some sister in particular, they shall be allowed to her to whom they were sent whenever she has need of them. And when that sister to whom they have been sent has no need of them, the abbess shall distribute them according as God shall inspire her, either in common or in particular.

Neither shall it be lawful for any sister to distribute that which is sent to her by relatives or other persons to any other sister whatsoever, even if she be in need, without the express permission of the abbess, which is to be observed; also should she wish to send it to any one outside the convent.

Moreover, besides the above-mentioned permission, the abbess, the portress and the discreet shall examine minutely what is given by any nun outside the convent. And this is to be understood also of the rota, that is, that the abbess and the discreet shall see that which is given, notwithstanding the permission of the abbess or vicaress. And the same is to be observed when the abbess shall give away anything, that is, that the portress and the discreet shall see it; and whoever shall disobey this rule shall be without her veil for three days, the first time;

the penance shall be doubled the second time, and so on, doubling itself.

We exhort all the sisters that in making debts they shall always and in every place bear themselves as becomes the poverty of Christ : so that if it shall happen that they are obliged by necessity to make some, they shall do so without any legal obligation whatever of satisfaction ; but they shall alone promise that they will strive simply in conformity with their position to bring about the satisfaction of the debt. And above all, they shall keep themselves from buildings, either great, superfluous, or curious, and shall be content to live in places that are poor, low and humble, conforming unto their profession.

#### CHAPTER XI—OF THE SISTERS WHO ARE INFIRM.

When any of the sisters shall fall ill or become weak, we ordain that the abbess or her vicaress shall be obliged to at once provide her with suitable attendance ; and the sisters delegated to the service of the sick or weak shall guard against any extraordinary negligence in the office laid upon them, but diligently, devotedly, humbly and with the fervour of charity they shall serve them as they would wish to be served themselves, and shall do unto others as they would wish to be done by.

Further, the abbess, when she is not legitimately occupied, shall, at least once every day, visit her sisters who are ill, especially when they are greatly suffering. And when the abbess is unable, her vicaress shall be held to do this, so that none of the sisters shall have occasion through their negligence to complain that charity has not been shown her in her infirmity. And also in order that the infirm sisters may have an opportunity of showing their needs to the abbess or to her vicaress, by whom they must be assisted according to the means of the convent.



The doctor, surgeon and barber must be Catholics, and mature and spiritual persons, and must not be introduced into the convent except in cases of manifest necessity or serious illness. And those who enter must be accompanied in a suitable manner, the abbess or her vicaress, or two or three of the discreet of the convent being present until they take their departure. And should it happen that one of the sisters should have some infectious and lasting disease, such as leprosy and other similar illnesses, on account of which she may not be with the others without danger, there shall in that case be provided for such a one a room apart within the convent, where she may be attended to as her sickness demands; so that on that account nobody shall be obliged to go outside the convent. We exhort, therefore, in Christ all the sisters, both present and future, that for the love of God they do not shun the service of such sick ones, as shall be necessary. And if by chance the abbess or her vicaress, or any of those delegated to the service of the sick, shall fail notably in their duty, it shall be told to the superior, by whom they shall be punished severely, according as they deserve.

The sisters who are ill shall sleep according as the Rule ordains in Chap. VIII, and may wear woollen shoes, and those for whom it is particularly necessary may use mattresses, but only with permission of the abbess, and consent of the majority of the discreet.

#### CHAPTER XII—OF THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE NUNS.

The Rule stating in Chap. VII that the sisters to whom the Lord has given the grace of work, shall work after the hour of Tierce; and in order that this may be continually the better observed by all the sisters, we desire that the same sisters, for the love of God, do not refuse the offices of humility and charity; but since they are







MODERN COMMUNITY ROOM.

laid upon them by the abbess or her vicaress for the good of all, and particularly of the convent, we desire that they shall perform the tasks given to them without any murmuring or opposition, but willingly and cheerfully, diligently, devotedly and faithfully; when they are able to do so and are well, as becomes those who have made the vow of obedience, and for the love of God have denied their own will. And when the abbess or her vicaress know that in all probability the sister is not able to work or perform the task given to her, they shall take it away; and they shall be careful not to order the sisters to do things which it is not in any way possible for them to do. And because it is contained in the aforesaid Rule that they are to work after the hour of Tierce; and because we have considered the straitness of our poverty and the necessity which might arise, we concede that if before the hour of Tierce it be by chance necessary to do or to finish something begun, then the abbess or her vicaress may command whomsoever it may appear expedient to them to do it or finish it.

We desire, further, and ordain in order that no time may be lost, that after Mass or after the hour of Tierce the bell shall be rung, which shall call and invite the sisters to work, the which sound being heard, all the sisters who are not legitimately hindered, shall set about doing and finishing the work committed to them. None of the sisters shall dare to begin any work without permission from the abbess or her vicaress, but each one of them shall endeavour to do everything with the merit of holy obedience and with the benediction and consent of her superior.

The sisters shall keep themselves from curious, vain and useless works; and when such work is brought to the convent, the abbess or her vicaress must be told and must know of it, and they shall judge if such work is to be accepted or no.

And whoever shall transgress against this our constitu-

tion, shall be severely punished, because the Rule says that the sisters shall do such work as belongs to honesty. And none of the sisters may accept work of any kind without permission from the abbess or her vicaress, especially when it is brought from outside the convent.

Besides the abovesaid things, we ordain that all the sisters present as well as future shall keep themselves from every pastime which may be secular, vain and little modest. And when they wish to take recreation together at certain hours, let their pastimes be to discourse on God, of the Passion of Christ, of the life of the saints, of the perfection of the Rule, of virtue, of the glory of Paradise, and of the pains of Hell; or of honest and useful matters, leaving aside idle, hurtful and lascivious words, that would be taken in a bad sense, as becomes the servants of Jesus Christ, who make profession to observe His Holy Gospel.

The sisters may not have in the convent profane, curious, vain and worldly books, but rather books which are able to edify their souls and kindle them in the love of God to spiritual profit and to the observance of the Rule. And none of the sisters may have books which they have not first shown to the abbess, and for which they have not received special permission from her.

Again, in the refectory books are to be read which shall nourish the spirit.

#### CHAPTER XIII—OF THE CORRECTION OF THE SISTERS.

We ordain, further, that in every convent the abbess or her vicaress shall admonish and correct their sisters, both humbly and charitably, so that they shall not be precipitated into the gulf of transgression for the sake of not being admonished and corrected. And although the presidents must make these admonitions and corrections with humility, they must, nevertheless, beware that under the image of humility and kindness they do not



allow licence and liberty to sin, and that under the shadow of charity they do not show themselves lovers of the sensuality of the body, and cruel towards the soul.

But all, without difference, according to their unworthiness shall be equally punished as is right. And should it by chance happen (which God forbid) that any sister should commit some serious fault, and enormous sin, exposing her soul to perdition and her Order to confusion and vituperation, and especially if one of them were so rebellious, disobedient and incorrigible as to wish to persevere and remain obstinate in her malice, and in no way to desire correction; for such and similar a room of discipline shall be made in every convent, strong and separate, in which she shall be kept like a prisoner on bread and water, for as long as the nature of the sin and the disposition of the abbess and her discreet shall decree. When the sisters fill themselves with arrogance before the abbess or her vicareess, saying some impertinent or harmful word or something full of insult, they shall eat bread and water, standing in the presence of all, remaining there while the meal lasts.

#### CHAPTER XIV—OF THE ROTA AND OF THE ENTRANCE INTO THE CONVENT.

As regards the entrance of secular people, men or women, or of those belonging to an Order, within the enclosure of the convent, the constitutions of Pius V and Gregory XIII, and that which the Holy Council of Trent in Sec. 25, Chap. V, before these supreme pontiffs, ordained, are to be observed.

When it shall happen that something is brought to the convent which cannot be conveniently received by the rota, such as barrels of wine, wood and other similar things, then they may be received at the gate, which shall not be opened more than necessary; and the sisters

deputed to the charge of the gate shall not permit that the bearers of such things go into or enter other places, except into such places where it is necessary for them to enter to put down the things which they bring. And on these occasions the sisters shall take care not to let other persons come into the convent, and those who have entered by necessity shall, their work being finished, leave again as soon as possible. And if the aforesaid persons shall go about the convent, all the sisters shall retire so as not to be seen, excepting those who are deputed by the abbess or her vicaress, who shall keep themselves as much as possible from any discourse with such persons, which is not altogether necessary, nor appertaining to the work which they are then doing in the convent.

The same manner is to be observed when building is going on in the convent, or anything else is being done necessary for the use of the convent.

And such things as the sisters are able to do themselves shall not be done by seculars, and they shall not allow the workmen to have their meals in the convent, but shall make them eat outside.

After this we counsel the sisters, and exhort them at the same time, that they trouble not themselves about the benedictions and consecrations of the abbess and other nuns, but let their sacred profession suffice them, which if they observe it, there is no doubt whatever that they will receive the benediction of the Supreme High Priest, Jesus Christ.

We ordain, further, that the confessor shall only enter the convent when necessary, and likewise the doctor and the surgeon, and then in the proper way, as is desirable.

#### CHAPTER XV—OF THE VISITING.

The Rule in Chap. XII says that the visitor shall always be of the Order of the Minor Brothers, according

to the will and mandate of our cardinal, and it is to be understood of those convents that are subject to and under the care of the Minor Brothers, but not of those which are immediately under the care of the bishop or other religious Order. Wherefore, those that are under the care and government of the Cappucin Brothers, must be visited by their prelates; which prelates, by the office which they hold, may, without the will and mandate of the Lord Cardinal Protector, visit, according to the declaration and concession of Pope Innocent IV and of other supreme pontiffs.

We desire, then, that the visitor be of the Order of the Minor Brothers, when the convent is subject to the Minor Brothers, which shall be assigned according to the above-mentioned concession of Pope Innocent IV, by the minister-general for all the convents of the Order, or by the provincial ministers for the convents which are in their provinces, when they themselves are not able or not willing to visit; and when the sisters shall ask for the visitor, and the prelate does not himself wish to visit, they must ask for a brother, who must be observant of his Rule, fearful of God, and who must have great experience in this art of all the arts, which is the care of souls—which visitor shall be obliged to visit all the convents committed to him every year, not once only, but more often still when it is necessary, and when he is summoned by the abbess or by the other discreet sisters for a rightful cause.

We ordain, further, that the prelate or visitor shall never, when visiting, be introduced into the interior of the convent, because, as the Rule says in the above chapter, he can conveniently visit the nuns standing at the grille, and can speak to them freely of those things which appertain to the office of the visit according as it shall appear expedient to him, unless it were necessary for him to visit the work-places.

The abbess shall beware that neither herself nor



through others she hide from the visitor the condition of her convent concerning the observance of this Rule ; but she shall rather endeavour that the things which have need of remedy and correction shall be told and freely shown with all confidence, so that the visitor may fulfil his office of remedying disorders and correct and chastise those sisters who have transgressed, with such suitable methods as the case demands, secretly or publicly.

And in the inquiry, the visitor must first learn to know how they live concerning the observance of the three vows : obedience, poverty and chastity ; and of the enclosure. Secondly, how the things of the Divine Office, of the prayers and use of the sacraments, proceed. Thirdly, of the manner of speaking at the grille and rota with secular persons, and other similar things which belong to the regular observance and religious life.

These, then, are the constitutions of the Rule of St. Clare, according to the reformation of the Blessed Collette, the reformer, through which we do not mean to compel the sisters to any sin, excepting as God, the Church and the Rule shall compel them ; nevertheless, we ordain that those who transgress them shall be severely punished, according to their crime.

The end of the constitutions made at Gebeunc, in the Province of Borgogna, in the year of the Lord 1434, on the 29th day of September, in the third year of Pope Eugene IV, and reformed at Rome in the year of the Lord 1610, on the 20th of November, in the sixth year of Pope Paul V.

Laus Deo.



## CHAPTER IV

### GUBBIO

THE story of the Poor Clares of the Holy Trinity Convent at Gubbio, in Umbria, from the year of their foundation, in 1509, down to the present time, is given here in full, because it is typical and continuous; and because the *Analecta Franciscana*, from which most of the following records are taken, happens to deal more lengthily with this convent than with most. In translating from the Latin verbal accuracy has been the chief aim.

"Certain fervent tertiaries, after overcoming many snares, insults and reproaches, founded this monastery of Clarisses. It had as directors fathers of the Regular Observance, even when our people obtained the convent of St. Jerome, for then it had been assigned to the Reformed. It was always noted for its most perfect observance of the Rule. In it forty sisters and more dwelt, even in the most recent times, of whom six-and-thirty departed this life with the reputation of sanctity, among whom stands out the Venerable Sister Clare Isabelle Gherzi, for whose beatification processes have begun to be drawn up."

*Here follow the Clare Sisters of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity.*

1. Four sisters were brought in the year 1509 from the well-kept monastery of the wooded mountains of Perugia to that of the Most Holy Trinity in Tguvium (modern Gubbio), for the sake of reforming it. Of these the name

of one only has been handed down, viz. Sister Prudence of Narni, who performed the office of abbess. It is necessary to say that she was adorned with all virtue, since the reformation introduced by her still continues lively and constant. A certain brother in the convent of St. Jerome, whilst engaged in prayer, is said to have seen her soul ascend into heaven, accompanied by an angel. The day and year of her death are unknown.

2. Sister Clara Benamata of Gubbio, a great lover of silence, who became a pattern of religious perfection to the sisters, gave up her soul to God the 11th of September, 1600.

3. Sister Raphaela de Vecchia Gubbio, adorned with the gifts of heroic patience, lofty speech and inviolable purity, was found day and night at the canonical hours, and was often fortified, it is said, by the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She died in 1614.

4. Sister Justina Vandini of Gubbio burned with love for God and her neighbour; she fell asleep in the Lord most peacefully in the year 1615.

5. Sister Angelina, born of the illustrious family of Ondadei of Gubbio, entered religion at an early age. She was tried with dreadful and constant pain, like gold in the furnace, but bore it all with invincible patience and a cheerful mind. She flew forth to her Spouse, laden with merits, in the month of March 1632. The exact day is unknown.

6. Sister Concordia Mosca of Gubbio loved from the depths of her heart peace, unity, brotherly love, agreement amongst the sisters, and the strict poverty and obedience. She died very peacefully on the 26th of May, 1634.

7. Sister Francisca Eugeni transferred herself from Recineto to Gubbio that she might profess the rule of St. Clare in our monastery. To such a degree did she cultivate the deepest poverty that she was content with only one tunic and outer garment. To this virtue she

added the greatest austerity of life, maiden chastity and obedience. She flew forth to heaven on the 28th day of October, 1636.

8. Sister Faustina Rambotti of Gubbio devoted herself to constant meditation on the Lord's Passion, so that by the trembling of her whole body she would often fall into a pious swoon. She held the office of abbess blamelessly. She flew to her Spouse the 21st of November, 1637.

9. Sister Constance Gabrielli, born of a noble family of Gubbio, gave herself up to prayer and contemplation, in which she obtained the honour of special gifts from God. She was especially devoted to St. Didax, and persuaded her parents by her entreaties to dedicate an altar to him. She went to heaven 8th of February, 1645.

10. Sister Paula Bentivoglia of Gubbio, of the Counts of Saxe-Ferratum, thought scorn of the world, and entered the monastery of the Most Holy Trinity, in which from the first days she appeared adorned with virtues. Being chosen abbess, she taught the sisters entrusted to her charge to follow faithfully the path of virtue. When at one time they complained that the Bishop of Monaldum was trying to bring the monastery under his own control and to withdraw it from the Regulars, "Be not afraid, my sisters," she said. "Pray with me, and the Lord will be with us." Whilst, therefore, they were pouring forth most fervent prayers to God, the prudent abbess sent a messenger to the Bishop, saying that if he wished to flee from the Divine indignation he would desist from the plan which he had formed. And so it happened. She died 6th of December, 1645.

11. Sister Portia, born of the Counts of Benum of Gubbio, after the example of St. Clare so loved seraphic poverty and the Holy Eucharist that she was content with only one tunic, and whilst praying before the Eucharist appeared transformed into an angel. She passed away to heaven 5th of May, 1647.



12. Sister Dionora of Gubbio, born Countess of Benum, having spurned earthly vanities and a distinguished marriage, took the habit of the Clares. Being elected abbess, she served the sisters as a handmaiden. Filled with heavenly gifts, especially when she prayed before the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, she fell into frequent ecstasies. She passed away to her Spouse the 8th of June, 1652.

13. Sister Cecilia, born of noble parents of Mengaccium of Gubbio, was distinguished by celestial gifts from her earliest years. While still a little girl, when she was one day passing in front of the monastery and saw the gate open, she fled like lightning from the hands of her parents and entered the enclosure without permission, whence by no force could she ever be removed. The Bishop who had purposed to remove her from the monastery was warned by a vision of St. Francis, and abandoned his intention. After her profession she shone with virtues, and at length, full of merits, passed to her Spouse on the 2nd of September, 1655.

14. Sister Victoria, Countess Della Porta of Gubbio, was a maiden of great abstemiousness and love towards God; she was also given to silence. She died in the odour of sanctity at a date which is not known.

15. Sister Victoria Zeccadoro entered the monastery at the age of seven, and also, as soon as she had assumed the habit, appeared a perfect imitator of St. Clare. She was most eminent in preserving peace among the sisters. She died a holy death on the 16th of May, 1668.

16. Sister Virginia Vincioli of Perugia, that she might devote herself more fully to God from the beginning of her life, took the habit of St. Clare in the monastery of the Most Holy Trinity. When she was hindered by sickness on one occasion during her noviciate the other sisters saw her saying something in a low tone. When asked what it was, she replied that she was performing the office of the Blessed Virgin, accompanied by holy virgins



with a very Beautiful Woman. Her illness increased, and, having been released from her solemn profession by privilege, she went to heaven in the year 1682 on a day not known. The swallows greeted her death.

17. Sister Theresa Conventini, born in Gubbio of noble parents and piously reared by a most pious mother, scorned a noble marriage and entered the convent, and bound herself to God by religious vows. She was most devoted to St. Peter of Alcantara and St. Theresa, and always strove to imitate the virtues and self-denial of both. She lost her eyesight whilst still in the flower of her age, and was worn out by many infirmities, which she bore in such a manner that she seemed a miracle of patience. She passed to the stars on Christmas Day 1684.

18. Sister Isabella-Antonia, born of respectable parents of Gubbio, entered the monastery at a very early age and professed the Rule of St. Clare; she was present day and night at the canonical hours, which she kept with incredible fervour of spirit. She was singularly devoted to silence, patience and charity. She gave up her soul to God, singing "Benedicamus Domino," on the 30th of December, 1684.

19. Sister Helena of Gubbio was a most devoted worshipper of the Holy Redeemer, who fortified her by a vision when she lay grievously ill, and informed her that she would not die of that sickness. She used to spend many hours in fervent prayer before the image of Him kept in the choir, by the merit whereof she one day obtained the rescue from certain danger of death of a sister who had fallen backwards into a well. She passed away to heaven on a day and year which are unknown.

20. Sister Clementia Vincioli was a nun of great simplicity, purity and perfection, for which virtues she was chosen abbess and novice-mistress, both of which offices she performed with the greatest prudence and charity. Full of merits, she gave up her soul to God (day and year unknown).

21. Sister Modesta Benamata was very zealous of the regular discipline, and filled with the other virtues; passed to heaven (date unknown).

22. Sister Cornelia was distinguished by her patience, humility, assiduous prayer and perfect regular discipline. The day of her death is unknown.

23. Sister Eugenia Gabrielli was wont to engage in prayer and heavenly meditations throughout the day, and from midnight till early morning. The day of her death is not known.

24. Sister Bartholomew, a convert from Fracta in Perugia, long performed the office of begging food for the sisters, as was the custom after the reformation of the monastery, wherein she appeared in the streets adorned with such virtue and angelic purity that she was the wonder of the citizens, and was venerated by them as a saint. One day, when she was returning to the monastery laden with bread, she beheld Jesus Christ laden with His cross, and He walked beside her and with her entered the monastery—by which vision she was affected with such gladness of heart that she fancied herself to be already released (from the body) and with Christ. Any time that she had left over from her employment she would give to prayer before the Host preserved in the tabernacle, which also she covered with a precious veil with the alms which she had collected. But it happened that before her work was completed she fell sick unto death. She herself besought her Heavenly Spouse with strenuous prayers that He would deign to grant her sufficient space of life for the completion of the veil. She was heard, and immediately became restored to health. When, however, the veil was completed she died in the greatest holiness. The year and day are unknown.

25. Sister Jacoba, likewise a convert from Gubbio, for a long time took charge of the sick sisters with every feeling of humanity. She burned with extraordinary love towards the most august Eucharist, from the adoration

of which she could not be parted by any wile of demons. The year and day whereon she was called to her heavenly nuptials are unknown.

26. Sister Beatrix, of the Counts of Carpegna, was a tertiary of the highest perfection and a most munificent benefactress of the monastery, whereinto she entered and lived very piously for many years, and departed this life with the odour of sanctity the 19th of January (year unknown).

27. Sister Maria Elizabeth Spellarossa a Spiritu Sancto, a Genoese, burned with love towards Christ crucified, and always loved the Blessed Virgin with filial piety. She was tried with daily infirmities of the bitterest kind, but bore them with so much humility, patience and submission of mind that she became a true example of virtue to the sisters. She met a blessed death in the odour of sanctity on the 24th of August, 1774.

28. Sister Maria Johanna a Jesu, a Bavarian by nationality, was divinely led into this monastery, and was filled with the gift of the loftiest contemplation. She twice filled the office of abbess zealously according to the regular discipline, the sisters as well as herself showing fervent zeal, especially concerning those things which pertained to divine worship. At the age of eighty she was called to her celestial nuptials, with manifest signs of a blessed predestination, on the 17th of March, 1778.

29. The Venerable Sister Clare Isabelle Gherzi was distinguished by miracles in her life and after her death. For her beatification depositions were taken. She passed away to the stars on the 27th day of October, 1800.

30. Sister Concordia a Paradiso of Gubbio for twenty-three years was tried by sickness, like gold in the furnace, but never uttered a word of complaint, being always content to suffer for Christ. She lived with great reputation for sanctity, and died the 15th of September, 1824.

31. Sister Hyacintha a SS. Redemptore, born at Uvada,



was adorned with the virtues of simplicity and obedience, and always fulfilled all the more laborious duties with the greatest exactness. She spent her time in prayer, vigils and mortification of the senses, and deserved praise for her great love towards the Holy Child and the Blessed Virgin. She bore the pains of sickness with heroic patience. She died a holy death the 12th of December, 1830.

32. Sister Maria Magdalena Gherzi was sister on her father's side of Venerable Clare Isabelle, whose virtues she always emulated, especially her love toward God and her neighbour, affliction of the body, contempt of self, and virgin brightness. On the day after her death, which was like the sleep of an angel, a certain girl probationer who was sick unto death in the monastery of St. Benedict commended herself to her, and grew well at once. Depositions of the life and virtue of this virgin were duly drawn up by the Bishop of Gubbio, and are preserved in his episcopal archives. Her blessed death took place on the 9th of June, 1844.

33. Sister Maria, from the Assumption of Genoa, became an example to the other sisters by the simplicity of her life, the lustre of her morals and her observance of regular discipline. Her body remained unburied for three days, but breathed forth no evil odour; nay, grew continually more beautiful. She passed away to the stars on the 31st of May, 1848.

34. Sister Clare Teresa of All Saints, born at Sestrum Ponens, was prone to virtue from her infancy, and an example to her contemporaries. When she had taken the habit she shone more and more in virtue. After her death, when her body was placed in the church, it began at once to shine with so great beauty that those who beheld it were moved to devotion, and when pricked by a certain sister with a needle it dripped blood. She was united to her Heavenly Spouse on the 19th day of December in the year 1854.



The Blessed Clare Isabelle Gherzi, when at Genoa in the twelfth year of her age, had a vision of St. Francis and St. Clare, who said to her : " God has deigned to hear our prayers and chosen you to be our daughter. You are destined for the convent of the Holy Trinity at Gubbio ; there you will assume our habit. Your zeal will vanquish the abuses and laxity of that cloister." Her father refused to accept this pronouncement ; but one day, when he was warmly denouncing the vision, the nurse entered with his youngest child, Josephine, only seven months old ; and he, striking the infant's cheek, said : " And what, little one, do you think of this vision ? " From the arms of her nurse the infant answered clearly : " My sister will be first a nun at Gubbio and then a saint." This was the only time Josephine spoke until, like other infants, she arrived at the usual age. Angele took the habit at Gubbio in 1758, and took the name of Clare Isabelle ; she was elected abbess in 1778 and eight times subsequently, at the end of each three years of office. This is the more astonishing as during her fourth term of office she developed ill-health, and thereafter had to govern the community from her cell. The doctors desired the abbess to take drives in order to restore her health ; against her wish, a dispensation was procured and the drives undertaken. But God decreed that the exercise should aggravate rather than assuage her malady, and the abbess was relieved of further breaks in her enclosure. Though very severe to herself in maintaining the Rule, the abbess was a gentle mother to her daughters ; and one day, when she was sending her vicaress, a rather hard German nun, to the Chapter of Faults, she said : " Go and hear the faults of the sisters, but please remember that I wish you to be Italian rather than German in correcting them." She died in 1800, and the cause for her beatification has been introduced. There is nothing more heroic recorded of this Clare so recently decreed by the Church to be worthy of universal veneration ; her vocation is regarded as supernatural, simply

because she so quietly and persistently pursued her path, and maintained the love and esteem of those who shared the cloister with her.

The nuns of this convent follow the Urban Rule; they are to this day under the charge of the Friars Minor, who aid them alike in their spiritual and material necessities. There are extern sisters, who beg from door to door for broken food, which they collect in clean white sacks carried over their shoulders; and all about this beautiful town, so full of legends of St. Francis and Brother Wolf, the spirit of poverty and joy seems still to linger. There is a simplicity and peace that even the casual visitor cannot miss, for as we came out from Benediction each evening some one always asked us to share the "*passeggiata*" with them, and we joined gladly in this, the great dissipation of the town, and, pacing up and down the main street between prayers and dinner, exchanged greetings with priests and laics alike.

One of the favourite stories in Gubbio is that of Sister Bartholomew, on p. 120, how she, poor extern sister, whose duty was merely to beg bread, was allowed to see Christ walking beside her, and to know by the vision that He approved her work.

As it was the tertiaries who founded this convent, and who still largely support it, it is worth while to quote the following brief records of a few who are famed for sanctity—

1. Lady Beatrice, of the Counts of Carpegna, sister, of whom an account is given above in the monastery of the Most Holy Trinity.

2. Sister Sabina, a noblewoman of Gubbio, who devoted herself wholly to God in the beginning of her life, shone everywhere with the admirable light of virtue. Being of great beauty, she was sought by many in marriage, and, contrary to her will, the virgin was given in wedlock to Lord Laurence of Andreolum. In her married life she preserved inviolate the same rule of life which she had



QUESTING SISTERS AT GUIRIO.





taken up from her infancy; nay, she even added to it. She bore with wonderful patience the loss of sons, the disfavour of her husband and the reproach of the people. She was often fortified with the Eucharist, from receiving which she was never able to be moved by the guile and vexation of demons. She died most holily on the 22nd of October, 1633, distinguished by miracles both before and after her death. Her body rests in our church of St. Jerome, whereof she was a most devout worshipper.

3. Sister Laura, of the Counts Gabrielli, was born at Gubbio. Although she was of very tender age, she was nevertheless constantly engaged in mortification of the senses, prayers, fastings and meditations. Moved with pity for the poor, she would refresh the indigent with the meal prepared for herself, which practice she maintained even in her married life. In obedience to the will of her parents, she married a man of equally high rank, yet she remitted nothing of the virtues practised in her previous life; nay, rather she allured other noble women by her word and example to a pious life, scorning vanities and avoiding dances; whereby she incurred the displeasure of her husband, who one day drove her from the house in a fit of anger, but, repenting of his deed, recalled her. The pious woman bore all with invincible patience.

When widowed by her husband she gave her name to the Third Order, and walked barefoot, wearing rough sackcloth. She was insulted by her relations, who disliked this mode of life, with reproaches and stripes, but could not be deterred from the rule she had adopted. Being greatly concerned for the welfare of her neighbours, she opened a hospice during her lifetime for girls who were exposed to danger, at her own cost and with the alms which she had collected. These girls she educated piously and holily as long as she lived. She was often refreshed with heavenly visions, and was enriched with gifts of

ecstasies, prophecy and miracles, and with other divine graces, yet she thought so humbly about herself that she always professed she was worthy of Gehenna. She died most holily on the 10th of December, 1641. Her body was translated to the church of St. Jerome.

4. Sister Virginia, sister of the last-named, by whose exhortation she cultivated, even at a tender age, the chastity of widowhood, and emulated her sister's virtues. She died with a blessed ending (day and year unknown).

5. Sister Victoria Raffaelli-Marioni, a noblewoman of Gubbio, was moved by the example of her sister Laura, lived a most holy life and died a most holy death (day and year unknown).

6. Sister Angela Bosi, a noble lady of Gubbio, most devoted adorer of the Blessed Virgin Mary, imitated the life of her sister Laura, and was an example to all in her good works. The date of her death is unknown.

7. Sister Lucretia Mengacci-Beccoli, of Gubbio, was a very fervent tertiary. The day and year of her death are unknown.

8. Sister Julia Massarelli, a widow of Gubbio, was a pattern of all virtues. Day and year of decease unknown.

9. Sister Raphaela Gambocci, a widow, and Sister Elizabeth, her virgin daughter, the former the sister, the latter the niece, of the Blessed Octavia Gambocci, also a tertiary of Gubbio, adhered most fully to St. Laura. These, by serving God amongst the sick and assisting girls in danger, acquired a celestial treasury, and passed away to glory at an unknown date. The sacred remains of all these are honourably preserved in the church of St. Jerome.

In all our convents the Society of the Third Order is established, and the chapel of the said Queen, St. Elizabeth, is found, wherein the brothers and sisters used to meet under the direction of the commissary. Hence, if all the deeds of our predecessors worthy of note had come

down to us, assuredly the list of men and women who died in the odour of sanctity would be fuller.

Father Michael-Angelo of Fabicella, Reader of Theology, wrote a "Life of Sister Maria Fedeleva Spellarossa, a sister of the monastery of the Most Holy Trinity of Gubbio," which exists in MS.

## CHAPTER V

### BLESSED AGNES OF BOHEMIA

THE Blessed Agnes, Princess of Bohemia and Poor Clare, was born at Prague on the 20th of June, 1197. She spent sixty-four years in the cloister, and died on the 2nd of March, 1282. She was beatified by Pius IX in 1874, though in Bohemia and North Italy she is generally spoken of as St. Agnes of Bohemia. She was the daughter of Premislas, King of Poland, and her mother was the sister of the King of Hungary and aunt of St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

Agnes was educated at the convents of Cistercian nuns at Trebnitz and the nuns at Doxane, and early dedicated her virginity to God. Twice she was betrothed by her parents whilst she was a mere child, but in the first case her fiancé died, and in the second broke off the engagement. At last, when she was in her teens, she was engaged to the great tyrant Frederick II, whom we have already come across as importer of those Saracens who attacked Assisi. When, after many years, the Emperor announced that he was coming to claim his bride, Agnes wrote to the Pope and implored him to come to her aid and help her to definitely enter the religious life. Gregory IX sent a nuncio to Prague to aid the Princess, and the state of affairs was made known to the irascible Frederick. He seems to have been more amazed than angry, and said: "Had she left me for a mortal man I would have avenged myself with the sword; but since she prefers to me the King of Kings I can take no offence."

On Pentecost Sunday 1236 Agnes received the habit of



the Poor Ladies at the hands of the apostolic nuncio and in the presence of the Court. She was fortified by a letter from St. Clare and the presence of five of the Poor Ladies from Assisi, who were to aid in forming this first house of the Order in Bohemia. In a second letter from St. Clare there is mention of various gifts she sends to her "dear daughter," and these relics—a wooden cross, a rope girdle and a wooden drinking-bowl, all of which had been used by St. Clare—were long treasured at Prague, and are said to have worked miracles.

Agnes was the first Princess of the blood royal to become a Poor Clare, and she seems to have grasped the idea of poverty and joy framed by St. Francis in the true spirit. In the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists it is related: "You might see her, the daughter of Primislas, King of Bohemia, lighting with her own hands the fire for the sisters; you might see her, the sister of Wenceslas, King of Bohemia, cleaning out the dirty rooms; the intended bride of the Emperor Frederick perspiring in the kitchen like any scullery-maid. And while she did so not with an angry and sour face, but filled with joy, and by her sweet expression showing she was the true servant of Christ. She behaved in this way not only to those who were healthy, but she gladly extended her services to those who were ill. She spread soft beds for them; she carefully removed all that was offensive to the eye or nose; she prepared food with her own hands and cooked it nicely. She wore herself out in untiring energy, so that the sick might be freed from pain and restored to health." Agnes's sympathy with the sick is shown in the hospital which she founded for them, and which is in use to this day.

In 1238 Agnes secured from Gregory IX that precious privilege of poverty for her convent which Clare had secured for St. Damiano: never was the convent at Prague to be forced to receive possessions. The noblest of the land were swarming to join Agnes: they were "Ladies" indeed; they were "Poor" indeed! The third

letter of St. Clare to Agnes is wonderfully beautiful, and probably with it went a copy of the First Rule. It was a great thing for Agnes to have the Abbess of St. Damiano fighting by her side, for the Popes showered privileges and indulgences on the Princess. Her presents from the Popes arrived constantly, in the form of permissions to wear fur, shoes, stockings; the use of a mattress and a feather pillow! Agnes took no notice of these indulgences, but one privilege for herself and her sisters she did avail herself of—the right to have Mass said in the choir, so that all could see the priest at the altar, five times a year. Few understand how the Poor Clare deprives herself of religious privileges in entering the cloister—all the softer charms of religion are put aside, together with the worldly luxuries. No more the gorgeous cathedral Mass, the brilliant preacher, the beautiful singing! The Poor Clare is austere in everything.

Agnes lived to over eighty years of age, though she practised many mortifications and passed through great bodily suffering. On her death-bed she said to her sisters: "Love God and trust in Him, and He will ever come to your succour. And hold fast to poverty: it is the bone and blood and life of our religion."

The following are the four precious letters of St. Clare to the Blessed Agnes—slightly abbreviated to avoid repetition—

#### LETTER I.

To the illustrious and venerable virgin Agnes, daughter of the powerful and ever-invincible King of Bohemia, Clare, the unworthy handmaid of Jesus Christ, and servant of the virgins consecrated to God in the monastery of St. Damiano, sends her spiritual greetings, and with a profound respect prays that she may enjoy the glory of eternal happiness.

We have heard with a great joy of your holy and blameless life, the fame of which is spread abroad throughout

almost all the world. We, who desire above all things to do the will of Jesus Christ, rejoice and exult because you have chosen the contempt of the world in preference to its honours, and because you have embraced with all your soul poverty in preference to temporal riches, heavenly treasures before those of earth. Also that you have been deemed worthy to be the mother, sister and bride of the Son of the Most High God. His love will satisfy you, dear sister, as it exceeds beyond understanding all the pleasures and joys of this world; He will crown you with a golden crown signed with the sign of holiness.

Wherefore I exhort you, O lady of great reverence, be strong in courage and fervour of soul in the holy service which you have begun. Lay aside all incumbrances, since he who is naked can wrestle more freely with his adversary than he who is burdened with garments—and he who is clothed in fine raiment cannot fight with the world and hope for victory. It is difficult to live in splendour in this life and to reign with Christ in the life to come! It is truly said: "It is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven!" Cast away, then, those superfluous garments, the goods of this world, and so enter into the spiritual combat freer and disembarassed. Add virtue to virtue, so that the Lord, whom you serve in such love and humility, may clothe you with His grace and adorn you with His heavenly gifts.

Also I beseech you to graciously commend me and my sisters here with me to our Lord Jesus Christ in your prayers, that we may also become worthy of His mercy and His glory in the life to come.

Farewell. Live in the Lord and pray for me.  
Alleluia!

## LETTER II.

Clare, the lowly and unworthy servant of the Poor Ladies at St. Damiano, wishes health to the Queen Agnes, daughter of the King of Kings and spouse of Jesus Christ.



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I thank and praise God unceasingly for all those heavenly gifts and virtues with which He has enriched and clothed your soul, and that you have been found worthy of becoming the spouse of the Heavenly King. You have rejected the pomps and vanities of an earthly kingdom, and have become instead a lover of holy poverty, and have followed the way of Jesus with humility and a burning love.

By His love, I beseech you, meditate daily on your vocation and persevere in those high resolutions with which God is pleased to inspire you. Like another Rachel, have ever in remembrance the beginning of your religious life. Guard jealously all you have gained and go forward with speed and swiftness on that heavenly road, lest in lingering your feet should become soiled by the dust of earth. Keep your way then joyfully, tranquilly and earnestly, and listen to none who would move you from your noble resolves or place stumbling-stones in your way.

Aim always at perfection, and pray without ceasing to the Most High for it; follow the counsels of our revered father, Brother Elias, Minister-General of our Order, and value them as a precious treasure and above all other counsels.

Burn with a longing to liken yourself to Jesus. If you suffer now with Him you shall also be glorified with Him; if you sorrow with Him you shall rejoice with Him.

Farewell, most beloved sister and virgin, blessed in your Spouse. Graciously pray for us without ceasing, and know that we rejoice always in the good things God has spoken to you.

### LETTER III.

I rejoice in the Lord at the tidings received of your health and continual progress in virtue. Sweet sister, beloved in Christ, the joy of angels and our sisters' crown,



you have made yourself the support and strength of the weak and suffering members of His mystical body.

Love the Son of the Eternal Father with your whole heart, as He with a whole heart offered Himself for you. Love that holy Virgin Mother who bore in the slender womb of her body the God-Man, and imitate her always in humility and blessed poverty, that you may bear Him always spiritually in your heart.

I come now to the points which you asked me to explain to you : that is, what festivals are those on which we are allowed to vary our food. I will write them for you, my beloved, just as our holy Father Francis specially taught us they should be kept.

Except the weak and infirm, to whom he ordered every consideration should be paid, no one is permitted to take other than Lenten fare, whether on ordinary days or on festivals. We who are in good health fast daily, except on Sundays and on Christmas Day (and on these days we may take two meals). Likewise on Thursdays it is according as each one is disposed, so that to whoever it seems good not to fast is not compelled to do so. Also we are not bound to fast on the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Holy Apostles, unless they fall on a Friday. But those of us who are strong always use Lenten fare. But as our flesh is not iron, nor have we the strength of marble, I beg you earnestly, beloved sister, to avoid a too rigorous abstinence, which I believe you now observe, so that while you live and hope in the Lord you may render Him a service full of reason, and the sacrifice you offer Him may be seasoned with salt of prudence.

Farewell in our Lord.

#### LETTER IV.

O mother, daughter and spouse of the King of all ages,

I have not written so often as my soul and yours would have wished, but think not, therefore, that the great love I bear you has grown fainter or one whit less. I love you ever as your mother's heart loved you.

O happy one ! to you it has been given to taste the holy joys of a heavenly union with the Lamb without spot who taketh away the sins of the world. . . .

When engaged in your meditations remember your poor mother, and know that I have written the happy remembrance of you indelibly on the tablets of my heart, holding you dear above all others. Need I say more, O blessed daughter ? The tongue of my body is silent in loving thee, for it cannot express the love I bear you ; it is for the tongue of the spirit to speak. Wherefore kindly and graciously accept that which I have so imperfectly written, and see in it at least that mother's love which I daily feel for you and my other daughters.

Farewell, my beloved one ! Farewell to you and your daughters until we meet at the glorious throne of the great God. Pray to Him for us.

I commend earnestly to your charity our most dear brothers whom we have sent as messengers : Amato, beloved of God and man, and Brother Bonagia.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHARITAS P. LUTHER

THE *Chronica Anonyma* of a German friar, which is extant at St. Isidore in Rome, gives us the beginnings of seven convents of St. Clare in Germany, and will serve as an introduction to the story of Charitas Pirkheimer, the great abbess of Nuremberg, the friend of Albrecht Dürer, Erasmus and Melanchthon, and the worthy adversary of the Lutheran reform.

The following translation is from the Latin edition of Father Luke Carey, 1884—

#### CONVENTS OF THE SISTERS OF ST. CLARE.

##### *Seßlingen.*

In A.D. 1237, St. Clare sent some holy virgin sisters to Bohemia and Germany, who came through Tridentum (Trent), where a monastery had been built for them, to Ulm, where some of them remained and began to build a poor little monastery or dwelling in a place called "Uff dem Griess," where now stands the somewhat wealthy hospital of St. Elizabeth. Here they lived at first under the rule or institutions of St. Benedict, observing, nevertheless, the constitutions of St. Clare, their mother. And at length they abandoned the rule of St. Benedict, and adhered entirely to the constitutions of St. Clare. The first abbess was named Hedwig. There was at that time a certain mature and devoted friar of our Order of Minors, named Albert, by whose government and direction those sisters lived in all holiness and profited greatly. They built a dwelling in the said place, where at that time

there was a court named Münchhoff uff dem Griess, which a nobleman—Udabricus of Freiberg—bestowed freely upon the said sisters. But when those sisters had dwelt there devoutly for some years, they decided to move their establishment outside the town of Ulm. A certain devout matron, the Countess of Dillingen, heard of this, and with the consent and approval of the Counts of Dillingen, presented and endowed a building site in Sefflingen for the said sisters, and there founded a monastery for seventy-two of the Order of St. Clare, whilst St. Clare herself was still living. Thus the monastery of Sefflingen, dedicated to Blessed Mary, first began in Upper Alemannia; whereinto those devout and holy sisters entered first in 1258 on the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

Pope Alexander IV granted to them the same privileges as the sisters of Clare had in St. Damien's, as his letters show. Certain sisters also, professed according to the Order of St. Clare whilst she was still living amongst mortals, returned to Ulm from the colony where the Order of St. Clare had been planted. With them they brought three heads of the sacred virgins of the Society of St. Ursula, which remain in Sefflingen to-day. So also this monastery in Upper Alemannia became as it were the mother of other monasteries of the Order of St. Clare, viz., Anger in Munich, of St. Cecilia in Pfullingen, and of St. Mary Magdelene in Nuremberg, of St. Agnes in Herbipolis, and of very many others which received their origin and growth from the said monastery of Sefflingen. This convent was reformed in the year 1404. There are now forty sisters there.

In Fabri's old Latin chronicle of Ulm there is a characteristic story of this convent. Christine Strölin, the abbess of SEFFLINGEN, in 1489 faced a crowd of friars and citizens, who "marched upon Sefflingen in a great crowd, as though to fight for the glory of God." They had with them the abbess and some nuns of a "reformed "



Order, and they insisted in installing them in the convent. Christine refused to be deposed; she took up her coffer and walked out, and every one of her nuns followed her—no threats or persuasions could stop them. They took refuge in the house of a friend, and appealed to the bishop. There was probably something to be said on both sides, for Christine was re-installed on promising to adopt some reforms. The loyalty of her sisters appealed also to the citizens, who would no longer back up the friars in their forcible methods; probably also the firmness and steadfastness of Christine—worthy daughter of Clare and sister of Charitas—also won their admiration.

To return to the *Chronica*.

### *Pfilingen.*

In the year 1250, while St. Clare was still alive, a monastery of the Order of St. Clare was started at Pfilingen in the Church of St. Cecilia the Virgin, by the devout and noble ladies Irmela, or Irmegilda, and Mechtilda, about the Feast of St. Martin. But in A.D. 1252, on the Feast of St. Othmer, abbot, there came sisters from Ulm or Sefflingen, from the monastery which had already been begun but not yet completed, and were solemnly inducted into the said monastery near Pfilingen. In the year of our Lord 1278, on the Feast of St. Catharine, those two devout matrons, already mentioned, received the habit of the Order of St. Clare, wherein they lived there holily and died happily in the family of God.<sup>1</sup>

### *Convent of Alensbach.*

In the year 1283, on the 13th of August, a new settlement of the Order of St. Clare began in the monastery of Alensbach near Keyserberg. In this monastery from

<sup>1</sup> It now contains two lay sisters.

its commencement there dwelt nuns of the Order of St. Benedict, by whose levity and extravagance, when the rulers of their Order had fallen away from their vigour, the goods of the monastery had been entirely wasted.

At length it was handed over to the sisters of the Order of St. Clare, who are stated to have spent some time previously in the town Künsheim, next to the parish church, as the pictures both of the Orders of Minors and St. Clare painted on the walls still bear witness. On the first day then of entrance into the said monastery, forty noble and honourable persons abandoned the secular life and assumed the Order of St. Clare, in the presence of the lords of the land and of a countless multitude of the chief people of both sexes from the surrounding cities, towns and villages, assumed the habit of the Order with the greatest solemnity and entered the monastery, wherein they observed the sacred rule and profited greatly.

#### *Nüremberg.*

In the year 1278, on the 10th day of July, in the first year of his pontificate, Pope Nicholas III sent a letter to Benedict, Lord Bishop of Bamberg, that he should incorporate into the Order of St. Clare the prioress and sisters of Nüremberg, who were called penitents. These had been professed in the Order of St. Augustine by William, Bishop of Paris, and had been confirmed by Pope Gregory IX, but had been dissolved at the Council of Lugdana. They were desirous of entering the Order of St. Clare, as was set forth in the entreaty of the prioress and the sisters of the whole of their convent, and of Lord Rudolph, King of the Romans, and of his wife, who were interceding for them. This the bishop most promptly carried out by Lord Erichto, deacon of the Church of Bamberg, and Brother Albert, guardian of the Brothers Minor in Bavaria, and by Andrew, lay reader of Bamberg, to whom he committed their shares in the

matter. In the following year, about the Feast of the Epiphany, they brought to Nüremberg several sisters of the Order of St. Clare of Sefflingen, and thus was the Order of St. Clare planted in that spot. This convent, once very rich, is now wholly reduced under the power of the Senate of Nüremberg. There still remain two sisters weakened with age, who are allowed to stay there during their lifetime, but without the exercise of religion.

#### *Anger.*

In the year 1284 there came to Munich four sisters of the Order of St. Clare, who began the convent in Anger, and brothers joined them in due course. This monastery was reorganized on the Feast of the 11,000 Virgins, in the same year and under the same Prince as the Brothers of Munich. There are forty sisters.

#### *Hailbrunn.*

The first monastery of the Order of St. Clare was certainly near the imperial town of Hailbrunn,<sup>1</sup> in a village called Flein, in the territory and dominion of the nobles of Talheim, who bestowed on the poor little sisters many temporal goods from consideration for the Divine honours, as is found in a letter dated 1293. But I consider that the sisters from Sefflingen, joined by some from Pfillingen, were the first to plant the Order of St. Clare there. But in the course of time, on account of the inconveniences of the wars and the poverty of the establishment, they were transferred with all their furniture and belongings to the town of Hailbrunn, where they built a small and humble monastery in a corner of the city and served God in penury. But at length, whilst they were spending their time there, the nobles of Talheim

<sup>1</sup> There are now twenty-three sisters serving God freely.



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again made them the offering of a little house in assured possession, as letters dated A.D. 1334 bear witness. In this establishment they still remain serving God.

### *Bamberg.*

In the year 1344 a monastery of the sisters of the Order of St. Clare was begun in the city of Bamberg in Zinckenwerd Street by a devout virgin named Catharine Zollverein, and the first stone was laid. In the year 1343, on the day of St. Thomas of Canterbury, sisters of this Order were inducted, and there they remain serving God at the present time.<sup>1</sup>

Let us enlarge on the brief note on NÜREMBERG on page 138, for the sake of Charitas Pirkheimer, no saint, perhaps, but a wonderful woman and a great Poor Clare.

She was born on the 21st of March, 1466, of good family, and educated at the Poor Clares of Nuremberg, and passed from the schoolroom to the cloister. In 1503, at the age of forty-three, she was elected abbess. Charitas resembled St. Clare in many ways—particularly in steadfastness and perseverance and absolute loyalty to the Order; but also in a keen intellect and affectionate disposition. The letters of Charitas are as interesting as those of St. Clare; and Charitas gathered round her in the cloister her worldly family, just as Clare had done.

One of her sisters, Clara, joined her in the convent, and became her secretary; another became a Poor Clare at Munich; two of her nieces also entered the convent and delighted in loyalty to their abbess and their aunt. Charitas had only one brother—Wilibald Pirkheimer—a man of position and culture, who counted Erasmus and Dürer amongst his friends. Through this brother Charitas had made acquaintance with a scholar called Celtes, with whom she carried on a Latin correspondence.

<sup>1</sup> There are twenty-four sisters.



When she was elected abbess, the Friars Minor, who served the convent, called upon her to give up the practice of writing Latin. They must have been beforehand in their knowledge of the proverb—

“La femme qui parle latin,  
L'enfant qui est nourri de vin,  
Soleil qui luiserne au matin,  
Ne viennent point à bonne fin!”

Miss Eckenstein, in her *Woman under Monasticism*, says that Charitas conformed—to the fury of Wilibald; but the Poor Clares say that in spite of all her occupations, and in spite of the prohibition of the friars, Charitas kept up her study of Latin and of the fathers. St. Jerome was her favourite author, and she often gave conferences on his works to the sisters; also she read to them constantly from the Bible—sometimes in Latin, sometimes in the vulgar tongue. We learn also that by a special indulgence from the Pope, Charitas was allowed to accept an organ for the church, and she strove for the edification of her sisters by inviting the most celebrated and most pious priests to come and preach to them. Some of the sisters used to make notes of these sermons, and then send fair copies to other convents. So it is evident this was a community of highly educated and well-informed nuns. Of their steadfastness in the faith we shall hear more later on.

But troubled times were coming to break up this charming devotional and intellectual life, and Charitas forsook her polite letter-writing, and kept instead a “Memoir,” which has luckily been published. Luther had commenced his attacks on the Church, and in 1522 the Council of Nuremberg was busy applauding him; even Wilibald called himself a “good Lutheran,” and said he was all for reform. But Charitas was in tears. It was no reform that was intended, she said, but a cruel and deadly attack. And before long Wilibald had come to agree with her and had returned to his allegiance to

Holy Church, and stood by his sisters in the persecution which now began.

In her "Memoir" Charitas writes: "Many powerful and ill-minded persons came to see the friends they had in our convent, and told them of the new teaching of the Lutherans, and how it was an evil thing and a temptation to take vows, and that in that state we could not keep holy and were all of the devil. Some wished to take their friends and relations out of the convent by force, and made all sorts of promises and persuasions, the half of which they doubtless would not have kept. This arguing and disputing went on for a very long time, and there was often anger and ill-language. But since none of the nuns would consent to go, thanks to God's grace, it was declared that the blame lay with the friars, who encouraged us, and that it would be possible to convince us of the new belief if we had other preachers and confessors."

By the action of the municipality the Friars Minor were withdrawn from the convent, and Lutheran preachers were sent to occupy the pulpit, and Sunday after Sunday the poor nuns had to sit and listen to denunciations of all they held most dear. Also they were deprived of the sacraments, for they refused to confess to these preachers—they could have no confidence in them.

Easter came on. "We have indeed had a long and troublous Lent," wrote Charitas, "without any religious ceremonies appropriate to the holy season—no preaching of the Passion—no offices. Good Friday with its cross and Easter with its Alleluia have alike passed in silence, for we cannot obtain a priest."

The reformed preachers were, with their wild sermons, infuriating the populace against the nuns; and though Charitas was absolutely firm she was in daily fear of the convent being attacked and burnt to the ground. In a letter from Wilibald to Melanchthon, he says: "The preachers shriek, swear and storm, moving heaven and

earth to rouse the hatred of the masses against the poor nuns. They say to the populace that words are of no avail, but that they must take to force. It is a miracle that the cloister has not already been pillaged and ravaged, so adroit is this rousing of popular hate."

And Charitas writes in her journal: "We are in daily terror of being expelled by force. The extern sisters can with difficulty procure us sufficient food, for the market-women attack them every morning in furious manner. Our best friends no longer dare come near us, but our enemies penetrate hardly into the parlour in order to insult the religious."

Meanwhile the other Orders were dispersing—were flying before the storm. The Austinians, the Carmelites, the Benedictines and the Carthusians had fled; the Dominicans were hesitating; the Franciscans refused to go.

The municipality sent a deputation to Charitas requesting her to release her nuns from their vows that they might have freedom; bidding her remove the grille, and bidding all the nuns doff the habit, since it gave umbrage to the people.

Charitas was almost bitter in her reply; she said that the nuns had made their vows to God—not to her; that if the grille were removed the house would be at the mercy of men not to be trusted; that the populace need not see them in their habits so long as they left them in their cloister. The nuns stood loyally by their intrepid abbess, and no threats or persuasions could make them leave. Only force was left. On the Feast of Corpus Christi 1525 a crowd of people seized three of the young nuns in the chapel and dragged them away in spite of their cries and struggles.

In the autumn of that year Melanchthon visited Nuremberg and went early to see Charitas. They talked for four hours. He was shocked at the persecutions to which she had been subjected. She was charmed with his



moderation, but unmoved in her faith in Holy Church. She writes : "He is certainly the most modest of all the doctors of the Lutheran reform that I have met. He made me a long discourse, and avowed that holiness was as possible in the world as in the cloister. We were in agreement on all points except that of vows—he held that these were not binding. He condemned the methods employed against the Clares, and we parted quite amicably. Then he visited the Mayor and Town Council, and told them to their faces that it was a great sin to have deprived us of the spiritual ministrations of the Brothers Minor, and to have torn our children from our arms by force."

The Council decided to make one more attempt to induce the nuns to disperse, and if they refused to leave them alone to die out. This last attempt took place in 1528. Each nun was seen separately and asked to leave ; only one consented. The remainder were left in a state of boycott, and forbidden to receive postulants or novices.

Some sort of peace now fell on the convent, and at Christmas of this year the silver jubilee of the installation of Charitas as abbess was celebrated with rejoicing. Charitas and her convent had emerged from a long and serious battle without loss of glory, without reproach. Their courage and sanctity had triumphed over all trials. It was felt by all that the convent and the abbess had proved themselves worthy of the Order—had shown that fearlessness and steadfastness and loyalty to their ideal which had distinguished their holy mother Clare. No wonder that they danced to the dulcimer and sang their *Te Deum*.

But though a joyous it was also a solemn day. "In the morning the entire community went in procession, carrying candles, to fetch the Reverend Mother. The prioress crowned her with flowers, and then we conducted her to the choir, singing *Regina mundi*. Mother abbess was



weeping, but with emotion, not with grief. She presided over all the offices. We chanted very solemnly all the parts of the Mass. The Reverend Mother exposed the Blessed Sacrament, and we all adored; it seemed to us that we made spiritual communion. To console us for not being able to receive really, we thought of the words of Augustine: "Believe, and ye shall be satisfied." Then our Reverend Mother seated herself below the altar, and we all filed past her, from the oldest to the youngest, and to each she gave the kiss of peace with inexpressible tenderness. In her hand she held some rings, and we each received one in recognition of our faithfulness to our Heavenly Spouse, and of our fresh promise to ever keep the faith." Such is the account given by Catherine Pirkheimer in a letter to her father.

Think of those women to whom the sacraments meant so much, unable to communicate on such an occasion! Cut off from the chief consolations of their religion and yet staunch and true in their desolation! That they were able to have the Blessed Sacrament in their midst was due to the fervour of the Abbess of Bamberg, who at long intervals would send a disguised priest to them bearing the Sacred Host concealed.

In 1532 Charitas died, and was succeeded for a few months by her sister—then she died. The niece Catherine was then elected, "and walked with firm steps in the path of the glorious Charitas. Like her illustrious aunt, she strove until death—which overtook her after thirty years' reign." She was so valiant, so wise, so strong during these long years of darkness and trouble that her nuns seemed to see their beloved Charitas again in her. But after the death of Catherine the desolation was extreme; but few of the sisters were left alive, and one by one death called them away, until in 1591 the last departed, and the silence fell.

Of the sixty Poor Clares of Nuremberg, it is recorded that in spite of the preachings of over forty Lutheran

pastors they had to listen to, and in spite of all the trials and temptations, there was only one apostate. Her name is mercifully hidden—blotted out—for her record outside the cloister was down the paths of perdition.

As we have to record the closing of the Nüremberg monastery, it is well to refer to a daughter house in the Tyrol that is occupied to this day. At a very early date the Poor Clares had gone to BRIXEN, and had enjoyed many years of peace there before in 1453 an over-energetic legate—Cusanus, determined to reform them. He had already fallen foul of the wealthy Benedictine convent at Sonnenburg—for he was invested with special visitation powers, such as were granted later to Cardinal Wolsey in England—and now he turned his attention to the Poor Ladies at Brixen. But though less wealthy, they were as stubborn as the Benedictines, and Cusanus resorted to force to expel the abbess and sisters. There was a great outcry and an appeal to Rome. Cusanus was censured for his methods and the nuns for their opposition, and the Poor Clares of Nüremberg were requested to put matters straight. So the abbess was reinstated with some nuns from Nüremberg to aid her in certain reforms, and peace was restored.

In the old chronicles of these quarrels it is absolutely necessary to remember “other times, other manners,” for the language the bishop and the nuns used about one another is decidedly strong!

Now-a-days it would certainly create a commotion if a bishop with armed followers rode up to “reform” a nunnery; and if the nuns shrieked defiance at him from the upper windows! Why, even to the gendarmes in France the Poor Clares are as gentle as doves!

Be it noted that the blustering, tactless Cusanus never accused the nuns of aught but slackness; there was never any question of immorality. But he seems to have been utterly unfitted for the powers entrusted to him; and

when the next Pope was elected, those powers were promptly withdrawn.

The following note *re* Brixen occurs in the *Analecta Franciscana*—

"Sigismund, Duke of Austria (about 1460), most cruelly broke into the monastery of St. Clare in Brixen, at one time reformed by the Cardinal Nicolas Cusanus, and having bound with chains the father confessor, Nicolas of Prussia—a devout man—imprisoned him in the dungeon of a very high tower. The sisters themselves, overcome with fear, took to flight, and entered the territory of the most illustrious Lord Albertus, Archduke of Austria, whereupon the best provision was made for them by the Lady Mechtilde, his wife."

The brief record of ANGEL, on page 139, tells of the founding of a convent that was afterwards chiefly famous as the cloister where three princesses of the House of Bavaria sought peace: Agnes, daughter of Louis of Bavaria; Barbe, daughter of Albert III; and Marie Anne Caroline, daughter of Max Emmanuel and Thérèse Cune-gunde, daughter of Sobieski, King of Poland. They all three left saintly memories. In 1707 Prince Max Emanuel had the tombs of the first two opened, and applied to Rome for pontifical authorization for the public veneration of their relics: the process was commenced, but not continued. Marie Anne was born at Brussels on the 4th of August, 1696, and when about twenty years of age, seems to have decided to enter the religious life. In 1719 one of her brothers, who was studying for the priesthood at Rome, died, and this sad event turned Marie Anne's thoughts still more towards the cloister. She was in correspondence with Sister Mary Frances Himmelin of the Anger convent, the daughter of a tailor, who was afterwards to become her novice-mistress; and at Christmas 1718 she entered the convent for a retreat, and whilst there told her confessor her desire. He told her sharply that she must understand that she would be conferring



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no favour on the community, but that rather they would act graciously should they consent to receive her. Very humbly she admitted the truth of his words. Her great difficulty was to find courage to tell her father of her vocation; but at last she spoke, and the Prince, very wisely, bade her go and spend three months in the convent and then come and talk it over again. Her emotion, her joy, was so great, that she swooned several times whilst driving to the convent. Once inside the walls she never left them again. Her family begged her to return to the world just for a few months, to make sure that she did not regret the pleasures of the Court, but she refused, and so instead they all assembled to see her take the habit. The royal house of Bavaria is used to princesses who take the veil: there have been forty-one of them who have entered different Orders.

The Princess Marie Anne became Sister Emanuela, and at the end of her year in the noviciate wrote to her father for permission to take the vows. "It is my duty to inform Your Highness of the reasons for which I desire to enter this estate. I have the honour to assure Your Highness that I have only taken this resolution after consulting those who have the direction of my conscience, and after praying our Lord to make plain to me His holy will. Therefore I trust to be sustained by His grace in the fulfilling of my obligations, for my sole desire is to live according to the doctrine of Jesus Christ."

With great ceremony, in the presence of many royalties, the profession took place. Kneeling before the abbess the Sister Emanuela put her hands between those of the abbess and pronounced the solemn vows. Then all her worldly family said farewell to the happy sister of St. Clare.

There remain certain directions of the confessor towards his royal penitent, who seems to have merited her pet name of "Little Dove," if for simplicity only. The director says that Sister Emanuela should say her prayers



sometimes whilst pacing the cloister, for she seems to think prayers can only be said kneeling; she should better observe holy silence; the Reverend Mother must not allow her to be late in going to bed—and so on. A sensible confessor this, for there is no doubt that Sister Emanuela was but a delicate flower. She was constantly in ecstacy, and knew and declared the moment of her father's death. Wars now fell on unhappy Bavaria, and the Austrian soldiers took Munich, and were quartered even in the convent of Anger. Charles VII—brother of Sister Emanuela—had to fly, and just when events were turning more in his favour he died. Throughout these trials Sister Emanuela retained her simplicity and resignation. If she was ever given a choice as to her duties, etc., her invariable reply was: "I have no wishes—I have given my will to God. I pray you to command me what to do."

Princess Marie Anne Joseph, her niece, wrote: "We often go to the convent, most frequently to Anger, where the Princess, my aunt, is a religious. She lives a pious life according to the rule of St. Clare, which is one of the most severe, and under which she is forbidden to wear a linen chemise or to eat meat. Even when they wanted to dispense her from the last rule because of ill-health and her former Court living, she would not consent. Her humility and her mortifications are an example to all. She is more content in this state than if she were a great queen."

Three years before her death Sister Emanuela was stricken with paralysis. The end came in October 1750. She was fifty-four years of age.

In 1803, at the French invasion, the Poor Clares were turned out of the monastery of Anger. In 1809 Louis I gave this dismantled convent to the sisters of Notre Dame, having first carefully removed the remains of the three Princesses—Agnes, Barbe, and Marie Anne Caroline—to the royal mausoleum at Notre Dame, where they now rest.

In this convent in the year 1631 was confined the saintly Mary Ward, foundress of Gravelines, and of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Maria della Guardia"—as the Italians called her—had been travelling about the Continent and establishing her schools far and wide and making friends with the powerful everywhere. But she had managed to rouse ill-feeling in some small persons, and they denounced her as a heretic, and on the 13th of January, 1631, Pope Urban signed a bull for the suppression of the Institute. Mary was in one of her houses in Munich—the celebrated *Paradiser Haus*—when Dean Golla came to arrest her, and he consigned her to the care of the Poor Clares of the Anger. The sisters seem to have recognized the sweet virtues of their prisoner, and Mary Ward ever spoke gratefully of the respect and kindness they showed her; but they were left no choice about confining her to one room, and the only room available was small and unsavoury, with little light and air. Here Mary was reduced to death's door, and received the last sacraments. The sisters of the *Paradiser Haus* had written a petition to Rome in favour of their mother, and in April, after three months' incarceration, the order came to release Mary Ward and send her to Rome to answer the charges. It is only now, in the twentieth century, that Mary Ward is beginning to be truly known and valued.

DUSSELDORF must serve as a link to bring the history of the German Clares down to to-day. It was founded from Tongres in Belgium in 1857, and follows the Colletine rule. When the Reverend Mother went on to *Roulers* to make a foundation there, she left as abbess Mother Marie of the Immaculate Conception, a most able and energetic woman. For sixteen years the community lived in peace, till the *Kulturkampf* compelled most religious orders in Germany to disband. The order, which was issued by the Government, called upon the religious either to leave the country or to return to their own families;





MODERN REFECTORY (BULLINGHAM).



and the heads of communities were compelled by law to read it to the assembled religious.

Imagine the surprise of the nuns one day when they had those orders read to them! Luckily, Mother Marie was able to announce at the same time that she had arranged a refuge for them at Tongerlo in Holland, but that if any preferred to return home, the bishop was ready to dispense them from their vows of poverty and obedience, if they would preserve that of chastity. Not a single sister but preferred exile! So to the little private house in Tongerlo the community went, using one room as a chapel, a portion of another as parlour by day and dormitory by night, and the abbess shared a bedroom with a sick sister.

They were not allowed to beg in Tongerlo, so had to trust to the alms sent them by the extern sisters they had left at Dusseldorf—the life was altogether one of great trial. During this time they made a foundation in America under the saintly Mother Veronica. At last in 1877 the community moved into a more convenient house at Harreveld. After an exile of twelve years the *Kulturkampf* came to an end, and in 1887 the community received a permit to return to Dusseldorf, and there they still continue their cloistered life.

There are other convents of Poor Clares at Munster, Revelaar, Ratisbonne and elsewhere, but spirituality is at a discount in Germany just now.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME AUSTRIAN FOUNDATIONS

THE following translation from the *Analecta Franciscana* gives the story of foundations at Judenberg, Vienna and Gratz.

*Convent of Nuns of the Order of St. Clare of Judenberg in Styria, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin "in Paradise."*

The convent of nuns of St. Clare of Judenberg in Austria, situated at scarcely half-an-hour's distance from the city of that name, resting on the base of the mount after which the city is named on the one side, and on the other side close to the bank of the river Mur, which flows by, is popularly called "In Paradise," not so much on account of the healthfulness of the air and the delightfulness of the meadows, woods, etc., as on account of its singular devotion towards the Mother of the Word (that Mother who is the source of all beauty). It received its blessed beginnings from St. Clare, the pious founder of Poor Virgins, whilst she was still amongst the living; moreover, so that the Order started by herself at Assisi in Umbria should spread like a fruitful parent into other countries as well, about the year 1221 she transplanted certain sisters like young plants into Germany, and so to this spot of Upper Styria. The archives of the province, in an exceedingly ancient MS., record that a somewhat small church of the sisters, called "recluses," obtained the benefit of consecration in the year 1222, whence it follows that they had then already fixed their seat at Judenberg, though they lived not in a cloister, but

in an enclosed house. But the noteworthy piety of a certain citizen of Judenberg, named Henry, did not permit them to lack very long a duly appointed monastery; and accordingly he and his wife, Gisla, being both of them persons of wealth, made very large contributions towards building a formal cloister—from which time forth they may justly claim the title of “first founders,” even to the present. The beginnings of the convent building were made in the year 1257. But in the previous year, in order that all things concerning the building as well as the rule of life might be carried out according to the rule of the holy foundress, two disciples of St. Clara (who after a most happy rule of forty-two years died at Assisi in the year 1255), a sister named *Benedicta* and another whose name is unknown, were called from St. Damien’s (the convent of the holy foundress) to Judenberg. After a rule of four years they returned to Assisi, leaving the new plants an abundant supply of the holy seeds of virtue. Pope Innocent IV, by an edict dated A.D. 1254 at Anagnina, placed the sisters of Judenberg under the minister of the province, and by incorporating them gave them a share of all the privileges granted to the sisters of St. Clare at St. Damien.

Wrongs, the misfortunes of the times, the invasions of the Turks and the frequent ravages of contagious disease, which twice reduced all the sisterhood to one, so to speak, transferred them at one time to the diocesan power and jurisdiction, until at length Martin, Bishop of Seccovia, by an open document dated Leibnitz, 1598, restored the convent, with the religious living in it, to the Order and to the rule of the superiors of our province. When Luther’s most perverse teachings made their evil way very freely throughout these regions, and prevented virgins being received, on account of the prevailing fury of the heretics, the pristine brightness of the observances of the rule began to be much overclouded from the small number of nuns; wherefore, in answer to the entreaties



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of Her Serene Highness Marianna, Archduchess of Austria, the high Pontiff Paul granted by the letter of the most eminent Cardinal Borghese, dated Rome, the 3rd of October, 1609, that two nuns whom they call "chorales" should return to transfer themselves from the royal Viennese "Parthenon" of St. Clare to Judenberg, and should cause the original conventual regulations to be observed more rigorously, and lastly, that one of them should have authority to perform the office of abbess. Sister Anna Reselmayrin, having therefore been deputed from the said royal monastery, a person conspicuous for her piety, prudence and virtue, it is wonderful to relate with what eagerness of spirit she set about the work of reformation. Happily, she was so greatly assisted by grace breathed from on high that her devout daughters, already disposed from other sources towards piety, and obediently imitating their mistress and teacher in all things, after a few years had progressed so greatly in piety and character that some of them were accepted to occupy the cloister of nuns, founded in honour of All Saints at Gratz by the Archduchess Maria in 1603, together with others who had been summoned from Bavaria as religious inmates of that building. The Venerable Mother Anna, a zealous reformer, who presided over this convent with the greatest advantage and the utmost faithfulness for about twenty years, being a worthy superior, was six times re-elected abbess. Abundantly filled with merits both before God and man, and having won already an unfading crown in heaven, she was taken from the living, not without the reputation of sanctity, on the 21st of April, 1630, amidst the tears of the devout daughters who were under her. After the space of five years, when the old cloister, which was next door to ruin, was being rebuilt, her body was exhumed, and was found undecayed, flexible, emitting a wonderful odour, and with a perceptible flush of colour still upon it.

As the old church-monastery building, on account of



age, was causing much trouble, for many years the restoration of both from their ruins was contemplated. At length the Most Reverend Doctor Antonius De Pozzi, of the regular canons of St. Augustine, having been petitioned by the holy virgins with most humble prayer, came forward as patron with generous bounty and caused a church to be built with a tower, and, indeed, the greater part of the convent to be restored, at his own expense, and that a very heavy one, in the year 1636. The rest of the expense of completely finishing the new convent building was met partly by a contribution of the nuns themselves. In the following year, on the Feast of St. Nicholas the Bishop, the church was dedicated with the solemn rites of the Church in sacred commemoration of the Assumption of the Virgin in Heaven. The sacred function of consecration was performed by the Most Reverend Lord Marcus of Altringen, Bishop of Seccovium, who on the same day also consecrated three altars in it, dedicating the highest to the Most Glorious Virgin, the second, on the Gospel side, to the seraphic St. Francis, the third, on the Epistle side, to the blessed virgin Clare. The patronal festival is celebrated on the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin and the Heavenly Marriage, but the dedication is on the third day of Easter. The church is not very large, but very beautiful, resting upon very solid foundations. In the middle of it, in front of the upper part of the sanctuary, a hanging cross is displayed, fashioned with carved work; and it contains various decorated caskets, besides a fragment of the sacred Cross of Christ, and many other relics covered by glass; in the presence of which holy Cross (believed to have always been in the treasury) every faithful soul saying five Paters and Aves received an indulgence of forty years. A large altar, erected in the year 1727 by the wealth of various benefactors, is a singular ornament of the church. The tower rises on high, built of hardest stone wholly covered with a white facing, containing five remarkable

bells, with the names : St. Laurence the Martyr, St. Justina, virgin, St. Joseph the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, St. Clare, and St. Anthony of Padua.

As regards the fabric of the convent, it is in the form of a perfect square, distinguished by its double storey and dormitory. In it are found more than fifty sisters' cells, with ample well-arranged workshops, an infirmary and dispensary, and a sacristy. There is a pleasure-ground, by no means spacious, but sufficiently convenient and agreeable for the comfort of the pious inmates. As a singular glory is added to the church from the sacred relics deposited there in the holy image of the Crucified Christ, so no less the cloister has its own glories within its walls ; for besides lesser holy relics it preserves the whole head of St. Triphonia, virgin and martyr, also part of the arm of St. Anna, the mother of the Blessed Virgin, also an arm of the companion saint Mauritius the Martyr, and an arm of the companions of St. Ursula, virgin and martyr. There are also to be seen seven altars, a holy ladder enriched with holy relics, and a most devoutly constructed Via Crucis—true places of piety and encouragement towards the increase of virtue ; and the papal bounty grants all those indulgences which the Seven Churches and the Holy of Holies of the city of Rome, or the land of Jerusalem watered with the most precious blood of the Redeemer, dispense in abundance. Moreover, there is preserved in a certain chapel the image of the gentle Virgin, the Mother of God, formerly, before the unhappy times of Luther, exposed to public veneration, and most solemnly honoured also with crowded processions.

In this convent of nuns, far from all worldly disturbances, there now live thirty virgins dedicated to God, who, hating the vanities of the world, after the manner of busy bees in their most religious hive, gather unweariedly the honey of all piety and virtue, and in the ardent passion of love sing praises with sweetest psalmody

to their Spouse Jesus Christ, rendering to Him day and night their voices, their hearts, their works, their vows.

Immediately adjoining this ascetic house of nuns is the residence of the brothers, where five of them always remain : the superior, who hears the special confessions of the nuns ; the second, who hears the ordinary confessions ; the third, the priest who preaches on festivals and Sundays ; the fourth, the priest who serves the altar ; the fifth, the lay sacristan, the watchful guardian of the sacred vessels.

The greater seal, which is that of the abbess, displays in the centre an image of the Blessed Virgin standing, and round the edge is inscribed : " Sig. Abbatis, Monast. Ord. S. Clare de Assis, in Judenberg, 1245." Another and smaller seal of the convent which represents the Mother, crowned, sitting between the rays of the God-head, holding in her right hand the Holy Child, in her left the sceptre, has no inscription round the circumference.

*The Convent of Nuns, dedicated to St. Nicholas, at Vienna in Austria.*

The present ascetic home of the nuns of St. Clare, as we have already intimated in our account of the beginning of our convent, dedicated to St. Jerome, had been inhabited by brothers after the home of St. Rupert had been abandoned, from 1545-1589. Then for eighteen years, by order of the magistrate of Vienna, this place was turned into an orphanage for girls bereaved of their parents and in need of a respectable upbringing. These having been transferred to the imperial hospital belonging to the monastery of the reverend conventual fathers, by the order of the Emperor Ferdinand II, the nuns of Posonium in Hungary, of the Order of St. Clare, came into this building in place of them. For Anna Eleonora, the most pious Empress, born Princess of Mantua, etc., viewed with concern the misfortunes of her nuns of



Posonium, which arose especially from the continual violence of the people of Hungary, who were in revolt against their King. They had been expelled already three times from their own religious house, and on account of the prevalent heresies of Luther and Calvin, had taken flight, not without serious risk of their lives and souls. Moved with motherly compassion for them, she very easily persuaded the most august Emperor that the sisters who had been oppressed with such great hardships and afflicted with so many terrors, and who had been starving in the imperial hospital at Vienna for a period now approaching three years, should be given some settled establishment such as they desired. The most illustrious Lord Adolphus, founder of the Christian Order of Soldiery, and Elizabeth, born at Stozingen, his Consort, resolved to found a monastery for thirty-three sisters—that being the number of exiles from Posonium—and to this end to hand over to them the court-house with the chapel of St. Anne (it is now the house of probation of the reverend fathers of the Society of Jesus). But the most august lady, inasmuch as she thought it more suitable, on account of the proximity of our brothers living just opposite at St. Jerome's, and of the greater facilities for supplying spiritual services thereby, chose the church of St. Nicholas, and the buildings attached, for the abode of the nuns, with the consent of the most gracious Emperor. Accordingly, on the 3rd of October, 1623, the Clare sisters, who had professed Urban IV's rule of stricter enclosure, to the number of fifteen (the rest having returned to Posonium), were inducted by the Reverend Father Jeromy Strasser, at that time our Commissary-General for Germany, into this establishment of St. Nicholas, which had been most generously founded by the Empress in honour of the Sacred Five Wounds of Christ, the sisters being deeply sensible of her most tender affection for them as their pious mother and protectress. When, by the command of the Emperor Ferdinand II, on the 24th of



February, 1624, the said sisters had been placed under the spiritual care of the fathers of the province of Austria, the Venerable Mother Maria Magdalena Englin of Austria acted as first superior of the establishment, and later on as abbess. So much did she benefit this convent, by her piety and virtue and the grace of his rule, that she continued to preside over the sisters with the greatest credit for twenty years, being seven times re-elected abbess at the customary triennial elections. She brought her life and her duties to a period on the 20th of August, 1643.

Since the convent was now almost in ruins, and was fortified in great part only by beams—nor would the warlike times of the rebellions of the Hungarians permit its complete restoration—temporary support was given as far as possible to the most ruined parts. Workers began to restore portions here and there, and even the sisters themselves were by no means unready to carry stones, sand, tiles, etc., with their own hands, and to assist the workmen. In the year 1652 certain metalliferous mines in Hungary, belonging to the sisters themselves, became workable again, by the singular blessings of Heaven, and supplied at length more abundant means for somewhat repairing the convent and for entirely building the church, and the sacristy and choir both of that building and of the convent. When the fabric of the church had been completed, on the 9th of November, 1635, the Most Reverend Prince of the Holy Roman Empire and Bishop of Vienna, Lord Philip Frederic of the county of Breüner, dedicated it with the customary rites in honour of St. Nicholas, Metropolitan Bishop of Myrensis and Lycia. The anniversary is celebrated on the Sunday after the octave of All Saints.

At the same sacred function he blessed three bells, hung in a tower with a copper roof; the largest dedicated to the holy patron of the church, the second to St. Clare the Virgin, the third to the Redeemer.

This church of St. Nicholas, which is divided in the

midst with iron screens, is notable rather for its suitability for worship than for its size, and is adorned with five altars: the first and largest sacred to the patron of the establishment, the second to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the third to the seraphic St. Francis, the fourth also to the Blessed Virgin, the fifth to St. Joseph. Each was consecrated by the Most Reverend Prince of the Holy Roman Empire and Archbishop of Vienna in the year 1716. Besides the epitaphs of illustrious families engraved in marble, there is also a large statue of St. John Nepomucen, richly cast of purest silver, placed in the church in fulfilment of a vow by the noble Lord of Guarient, after receiving a favour from God through the patronage of this saint.

This convent of ascetic virgins, which had been threatened from time to time with great ruin, and had been in want of the most pressing necessities, began at length partially and, on account of the poverty of the nuns, at various times to be repaired, restored and in many new parts strengthened. Indeed, in the year 1668 the foundations were laid, and the sisters' infirmary built, at their own cost; in 1679 the refectory and the cloisters attached were erected by the bounty of the most august Emperor Leopold I; and in the year 1690 the novices' house, with the part adjoining, was built with money raised elsewhere; whilst in the year 1706, by means of legacies left by a mother and a brother to the sisters Maria Josepha (born Countess of Gavrian) and Anna Rosalie (Countess of Losenstein), the remaining structure of the convent was completely reclaimed from ruin, and rather rebuilt than repaired. The whole fabric of the convent thus assumed greater strength and better proportions—save that the dormitory of the nuns remained on the inside in a poor and disgraceful state, since the cells of the sisters, which were only separated by beams, had been provided with neither doors nor fireplaces. Wherefore, in order that the nuns should not sleep any longer

in the heated refectory (as was formerly necessary at the more inclement period of winter), in 1716 Lord John David of Palm, the dearly loved father of two of the sisters of this convent, caused new and stronger foundations to be laid, the dormitory to be divided into forty well-arranged and heated compartments, and the sound parts of the fabric, etc., to be restored at very great cost. He was, therefore, deservedly numbered with the first founders of this convent, and after his pious death was buried in the crypt of the church before the high altar. Finally the abbey, which was already giving way and almost falling down, together with the imperial building (*habitatio cesarica*) and the workshops annexed to it, found a benefactor in Lord Gregory William of Kirchenen, who, at the humble suit of his mother, Josepha of Palm, the superior of the modern convent, caused it to be entirely rebuilt in 1731 at his own expense, and obtained a grant of a hundred orgyas of timber, to be received thenceforth annually in aid of the needy convent from the most beneficent bounty of the Emperor.

The monastery thus reclaimed from dust, squalor and ruin, and now more fully furnished for the poor sisters, is situated just opposite our brethren of the monastery, only the Singerian Street coming between; while a secular building is attached to it behind and on the sides. The quadrangular-shaped convent encloses a small garden, on either side of which is a hermitage skilfully composed of undressed stone. It now contains thirty-nine inmates, though it would hold more. These are maintained principally by the annual rate, but partly also by the alms of the pious. The small space wherein the religious inmates are enclosed is distinguished by many remarkable places of devotion within it—seven altars, a holy ladder, a Via Crucis, etc.—to which, by the grace of the pontiffs, very many indulgences are attached. Among the relics of the saints which are here cherished with especial devotion are the remains, or rather the whole body, of St. Paph-



nutius, martyr, brought home by the aforesaid Lord Bishop of Vienna on his return to Vienna from Rome, and given to this monastery in the year 1646; a fragment of the Holy Cross of Christ; some of the hairs; also part of the Crown of Thorns; part of the finger of St. Mary Magdalene; some of the bones of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul; a tooth of St. Nicholas, patron of this place; and lastly, a MS. written by St. Antony of Padua with his own hand.

The abbess's seal bears in the middle the monstrance of the Sacred Host, placed above a closed book whereon rest three golden globes; on its side is seen the number 1686; round the edge is inscribed: *S. Conven. A. Clariss. D. S. Nicolas* (Abbess of the Sacred Convent of Clares dedicated to St. Nicholas).

*Convent of Holy Nuns at Vienna in Austria, dedicated to the Queen of Angels.*

The royal monastery of St. Mary of the Angels, of the Order of St. Clare, is close to the imperial palace, into which there is a carved entrance; in front is the magnificent church of St. Dorothea, virgin mother, of the Order of the regular canons of St. Augustine, overlooking on the right the royal church of the barefooted Augustinian fathers, and on the left, across the street, the palaces of the nobles. It was founded at great expense in the year 1581, and most generously established by Elizabeth of Austria, the daughter of the Emperor Maximilian II, sister of the Emperors Matthias and Rudolph, and widow of Charles IX, King of France. And hence, since it was built by a Queen for the Queen of Angels, it is commonly called the Convent of Queens. To begin with, the palace of Charles Antony, brother of the Archduke Maximilian II, was purchased, and seven nuns were summoned from a monastery in Bavaria and the aforesaid monastery of Anger by the said royal foundress to take possession of it.



In the year 1582, on the 5th of March, in a garden given freely by the most illustrious Countess of Kuenin, the foundation-stone was laid by the most exalted Prince John Casper Nēuböck, Bishop of Vienna; and so, in the presence of the most serene Queen and before the eyes of all the royal household, the first foundations of the church were laid. The same bishop, in the following year, on the 2nd of August, consecrated it in honour of St. Mary, Queen of Angels (the same dedication as the Seraphic St. Francis followed in the chapel of that name). It was beautifully enriched with the indulgences of Pope Sixtus V. The same day of consecration is observed annually. The church possesses, besides the high altar dedicated to the Holy Angels and their most august Queen, two side altars—on the Epistle side that of St. Anna, the grandmother of Christ, on the right that of the Holy Cross.

After the lapse of only a few years the virgins serving God under the rule of St. Clare had increased so greatly in numbers through the zeal of monastic discipline that fifty of them, of most exalted family, were maintained in this royal convent, experiencing blessings from on high and the most generous benefactions of their ever-munificent foundress. This royal convent is to such a degree exempt, by the privileges granted by the popes and emperors, from all other jurisdiction that it is immediately subject only to the most reverend father the minister-general, who maintains the direction of the whole seraphic Order, and to the most eminent lord cardinal, the protector of the Order; nor is it under any secular power save that of the most august Roman emperors. These great immunities were sought with earnest entreaties by the foundress herself, Elizabeth—as well from Pope Clement VIII as from the Emperor Rudolph II—who by her last wish besought with most effectual entreaties that henceforth the emperors would constantly protect it as the supreme founders, and would commit it to the supreme protection, and finally would

safeguard all the rights and immunities of this convent of virgins consecrated to God, which had been built with such great care, and had always been loved by her with such tender affection. The commissary-general, who is confirmed by the free votes of the nuns, and therefore by the authority of the Emperor, is chosen from the fathers of our province, takes the place during his lifetime of the minister-general himself, and, together with the nuns' confessor and another priest and a layman, lives in a residence adjoining the cloister. The said fathers, together with a preacher and another who sings the sacred rites at the altar daily, are sent from the convent of St. Jerome.

In this royal cloister, which has been very rich ever since its foundation, there is also a rich treasury, most sumptuously stored with sacred vessels, church furnishings and vestments designed for the use of the priests and servers, and absolutely abounding with wonderful tapestry, jewels, pearls and precious stones. Besides this sacred furniture, some more sacred things—nay, the most sacred of all—are kept here: the Blood truly shed from the most sacred Side of Christ, obtained for the monastery by the royal bounty of Eleonora, widow of the Emperor Ferdinand III, in the year 1668, and by a faculty of the most high Prince Philip Frederick, Bishop of Vienna, exposed for public worship annually on the 6th day of March; also a noteworthy fragment of the Holy Cross, which the royal foundress received as a gift from her most august father, and added to this treasury. Herein are preserved also the entire forefinger of St. John the Baptist, brought with her from France by the same Queen; the head of St. Christina, virgin and martyr, with the illustrious bones of St. Elizabeth, daughter of Andrew II, King of Hungary; also the head of St. Gertrude, widow of Ludovic, Count of Thuringia; the shoulder-blade of St. Leopold, Marquis of Austria. In addition to these there is the embalmed body of St. Parthenius, martyr, bestowed by the august Emperor Leopold I in the year 1666 upon

Maria of Bibiat, the Countess of Breüner, then recently elected abbess; also the entire body of St. Antoninus the Martyr.

There is preserved near a graceful picture of the little Jesus sleeping, an image of the Mother of God, called the Amirable, famous for its miracles; it is in a beautiful chapel of heavenly design, constructed at very great expense at the charge of the most excellent Lady Mary Magdalene, Countess of Mansfeld, supreme guardian of the Archduke; this is exposed in the church for the public veneration of the faithful, who come in very great numbers daily on the nine days preceding the Feast of Pentecost. Modelled after the likeness of St. Mary the Elder, painted by St. Luke himself and sanctified by his touch, it was also brought from France to Vienna by Elizabeth in 1578; then, in the year 1592, was transferred from the chamber of the defunct Queen to the monastery, as whilst alive she had suggested to our Father Peter Luck, her spiritual director. Instructions were given by the wish of the dying Empress to the nuns, that they should always bestow singular veneration upon this image, and that they might be quite sure that in whatever need they were (as she herself had found more than once) they would experience prompt assistance, upon invoking this most Holy Mother; and even so to this day not only very many faithful Christians, but also the most august house of Austria, make trial of the most merciful Mother herein. Moreover, this image is so life-like and so lovely that it surpasses all the art of painters. When any belonging to the august house departs this life, or any other untoward accident happens to him, it is said to grow suddenly pale first, with an altered appearance and with a movement of the eyes.

On the seal of the Venerable Mother Abbess the Immaculate Blessed Virgin is depicted, raised aloft on the clouds with angels flying round, two of whom are placing a crown upon her. Round the image is the follow-



ing inscription : *Sig. Abbat. Monast. S. Mariæ de Angelis Viennæ*. The lesser seal belonging to the convent has in the midst of it the Holy Virgin Clare holding a pastoral staff in her left hand and the Blessed Sacrament in her right, surrounded by the inscription : *S. Mariæ de Angelis Viennæ ad Reginam*.

*The Convent of Holy Nuns of Grecium in Styria,  
dedicated to All Saints.*

This monastery and temple, dedicated in honour of All Saints, by its original foundation is older than the cloister of holy nuns of Vienna and St. Nicholas ; but we are nevertheless putting it in the second place, because, after having been originally placed under the fathers of the Argentine province, it came to be placed under our Austrian province, as regards its first head, in the year 1687, as we shall relate presently. The place where now the convent of the divine Clare, virgin, is to be seen was formerly called "in stift" (in thorn), and with good reason, for while the seed-plot of heresies and errors was so near at hand, it deserved to be nicknamed the "thorn-hedge." During the absence in Spain of Charles, the Archduke of Austria, the heterodox leaders of Styria—open sectaries of Luther—in the year 1568 erected here, from the common funds of the province, an academy, which they enlarged and formed into a college, so that, besides false preachers, there was also a numerous crowd of professors maintained there, to instil the poison into the mind of youth along with their letters, and to educate successors to fill their chairs after them. But after the Archduke Ferdinand, then the second Emperor of that name—the most zealous defender of the Roman faith, and the Hercules sent from God against the hydra of heresy—had commanded, in the year 1599 most strictly, upon pain of death, that they should one and all utterly depart on the 18th day of September, before sunset, from the



city of Grecium,<sup>1</sup> all the ministers, to the number of nineteen, fled this place and city, and it was purged of the dregs of heretics. After the sectaries of Luther had happily been driven out, about 10,000 volumes, infected with the mange of the heretics, were publicly burnt. In order that henceforth all the heretics' hope of recovering their former establishment should be precluded, the mother of the said Ferdinand, the consort of the Archduke Charles and the daughter of the Duke of Bavaria, Maria by name—a most zealous defender of our Catholic faith—resolved to devote the empty building to "religion." Wherefore she willed that the profane buildings should partly be destroyed and rebuilt, and partly restored and reduced to much better form, and, together with the adjoining church, which she furnished with altars, should be duly consecrated under the patronage of All Saints. Accordingly, that this edifice should not remain longer without religious inmates who should sing God's praises and constantly care for divine things, a colony of virgins of the Order of St. Clare was summoned from the convent of St. Jacob at Munich—at that time in the Argentine-Bavarian province—to Grecium, and, with the consent of the prince of the country and the approval of Pope Clement VIII, in the year 1602, on the 11th day of November, virgins to the number of eight were introduced into the newly built convent. In the following year, on the 1st of July, in order that everything should continue on a firm footing in the service of God, the said Archduchess and Duchess of Bavaria endowed this convent of virgins, enriched it with gifts, and founded it with the greatest liberality by means of a solemn deed. Thus this establishment was transformed, by the bounty of its most pious foundress, from the thorn-hedge of non-Catholics to a bed of virgin lilies. With such happy auspices did the Lord bless it that this company of maidens, before five years had elapsed, had wonderfully

<sup>1</sup> Modern Gratz.

multiplied, and numbered more than forty virgins veiled unto God. It will be possible to judge of the intense regard of the pious Princess towards the establishment of St. Clare and its adherents from the fact that, as far as the care of her most serene children and the provinces under her rule permitted, she spent most of her time in this convent of virgins after the death of her husband ; and sometimes, by working hard in the kitchen, washing up the dishes and pots, laying the tables, serving up the food, sometimes by making the beds, laying the sick nuns on the couch, administering the medicines, washing their sores, etc., acted not so much as foundress, but rather as a humble handmaid for the love of God. Moreover, she adorned the church and its altars with sacred furniture, gold and silver vessels, and costly vestments woven with her own hands ; and from her household treasury she dispensed to it with the most liberal devotion distinguished relics of the saints. And when she had abdicated the government of the provinces, in order that she might prove herself not only the mother of the daughters of St. Clare, but also the daughter and poor sister of the holy mother ; with the approval of the Apostolic Nuncio and in the presence of the confessor of the holy nuns, she took religious vows under the simple name of Sister Mary ; and being most ardently united to God, she wore the vestments of divine Clare which she had secretly made for herself ; and she fell asleep with a most happy end, very full of merits and virtues, on the 29th day of April in the year 1608. Her most noble remains, enclosed in a very large marble sarcophagus, together with the hearts of her most beloved son, Ferdinand II, and his august consort, Anna Eleonora, and also of Ferdinand III, Emperors, are preserved and can still be seen in the enclosure of the nuns.

The church adjoining this convent, as we have recorded already, was brought by its most serene foundress to a much more handsome appearance, and was solemnly consecrated to All Saints on the 25th day of November,

1602, by the Most Reverend Lord Martin, Bishop of Seccovium. The feast of its dedication is now observed annually on the Sunday following the festival of St. Bartholomew the Apostle. There are five altars in it: the chief, erected most recently with beautiful workmanship, and dedicated to All Saints; the second to the Most Holy Trinity; the third to the Blessed Virgin Mary; the fourth to our holy Father Francis, with privileges; the last to St. Clare, virgin, the foundress of the Order.

The monastery, celebrated for the solidity and massiveness of its structure, for its position and for the salubrity of the air, lies facing the pleasant river Mur; and in addition to the bed-chamber of the most pious foundress, still containing her own old furniture, possesses numerous workshops to meet necessary requirements; a fine dispensary, a pleasant garden, and adjacent buildings which are let out to secular folk at an annual rental. Two spacious dormitories, one for winter and the other for summer, afford quite sufficient lodging for fifty sisters (although at present there are only forty-six). Besides a holy "way of the Cross" and many places of devotion, there are to be seen in the sacristy of the convent many large and precious objects composed of gold, silver and jewels. No little glory is added to all these by a noble genealogical tree of those who have more strictly embraced the rule of St. Clare in this cloister. For besides the most serene foundress herself—the Archduchess Maria, another Duchess—Maria Renata, the daughter of Ferdinand, Duke of Bavaria, and very many countesses and free baronesses of most noble family who had professed the stricter reformation of the Colettines observed most piously the rigorous rule of the Order to their lives' end.

It is true that the abbess and nuns, together with the monastery, were placed at first under the ruling and jurisdiction of the Brothers Minor of the regular life of the province of Argentine-Bavaria, principally because the holy virgins who had been called from that province asked



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their foundress herself, with the most pressing entreaties, that they might have these fathers (to whose direction they had already been accustomed in their own land) for their spiritual consolation and the fuller quieting of their conscience; and at that time our brothers—as they were reckoned—although they were living nearer to their convent (for only one street separates that and ours), were able to do very little, on account of the Lutheran heresy which was then flourishing throughout Austria and Styria, and the small number of qualified subjects (brothers in holy orders), since at that disastrous period it was not possible to acquire new convents; nay, rather, as we have noted in its place, it became necessary to abandon those which we had formerly possessed. Nevertheless, when the shades of error had been expelled and the pristine brightness of the Catholic faith began to shine, and when the number of capable religious was increasing, this convent of holy nuns with its inmates was placed under the control of the Austrian province; this was done by the authority of Pope Innocent XI and with the consent of the Emperor Leopold I, A.D. 1687, and was a safeguard from many inconveniences. In this establishment of holy nuns five of our brothers perform all the spiritual functions of the confessional, the pulpit and the altar, both to the satisfaction of the virgins veiled unto God and to the edification of the many lay-folk who use this church.

The religious head of this house was a special seal containing in the middle the head of the supreme Pontiff, surrounded on either side by figures of cardinals. The seal of the convent shows St. Clare standing.



## CHAPTER VIII

### ST. COLETTE AND HER REFORMS

ABOUT four leagues from Amiens is the little town of Corbie, and here, in the year 1381, was born Nicolette Boellet, whose name from infancy was abbreviated to "Colette." Her father was foreman carpenter to a large Benedictine abbey in the town, and her mother is reported to have been sixty years of age at the time of the birth of this her only child. Both parents were devout, and from infancy Colette grew up in an atmosphere of love and prayer. At seven years of age, we are told, she made her daily meditation for an hour, and at eleven she used to rise at midnight to go with others to Matins at the monastery. Her father and mother died whilst Colette was quite young, and left her to the charge of the abbot of the monastery. The abbot set about finding her a husband; but meanwhile Colette slipped away to Amiens, where a celebrated priest, Father Bassadan, was visiting, in order to seek his aid and advice. She opened all her heart, and told her desires; he declared she was called to the religious life, but that she must pray to God for light as to which Order she should enter. He allowed her there and then to take the vow of chastity, and Colette, full of peace, returned to Corbie and told the abbot. "You have taken the Lord Jesus for your spouse!" said the holy man, and he sought no more for a suitable husband for the girl.

Colette tried life with the Béguines, the Benedictines and the Urbanist Clares of Port St. Maxence, but felt no vocation. She had a great devotion to both St. Francis and St. Clare, and was much hurt at what she thought

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the lax rule at Port St. Maxence. About this time Père Pinet, a Franciscan, who was passing through Corbie, admitted her to the Third Order, and suggested to her the life of a recluse, or hermit.

With the consent of her guardian, the abbot, she sold all her goods and gave them to the poor, and was formally enclosed in a little house adjoining the church of St. Etienne, one of the rooms of which had an aperture into the church, so that Colette could hear Mass and communicate. The life of a recluse, or anchoret, was not unusual in mediæval times, and full details of it are given in the *Ancrer Riwe*, published in the King's Classics. Mother Juliana of Norwich, who wrote the *Revelations of Divine Love*, is the most noted English anchoress. As was usual, two pious women had charge of Colette, and took her her food and guarded her grille from too frequent visitors. Colette's two rooms were probably upstairs, and the "out sisters" dwelt on the ground floor. The life was one of fasting and prayer as well as of seclusion; and it is recorded that Colette also had charge of the church linen.

After three years of seclusion Colette began to be troubled about her vocation; she had visions which she believed called her to the work of a reformer. In the midst of her troubles Père Henri de la Baume, a noted Franciscan, came to visit her; and at once both knew that they were called to the same work. In 1406 the Bishop of Amiens dispensed Colette from her vow of enclosure, and Père Henri, his friend the Baroness de Brissay, and St. Colette left Corbie to go and visit the Pope and secure the necessary powers for working the reforms they desired to make. It is now for the first time we find it possible to get a mental vision of Colette. Warned by Delehaye as to the similarity of all the stories that arise about the infancy of saints, we have passed quickly over the early years of Colette; but now we have come to the time of briefs and bulls and other documents,



ST. COLETTE.





and can speak with certitude. It is no longer of an unknown ancess shut up in a corner of a little town, but of a woman who travels wide, and everywhere visits the authorities, that we have to tell.

Colette was tall and beautiful, and her cheeks were absolutely colourless—she was ever pale. She walked swiftly but surely on her bare feet, so that others had difficulty in keeping up with her; her dress was poor, her eyes were in strict custody.

It was the time of the schism, and Benedict VIII, the Pope of the French obedience, was at Nice. In September 1406 Colette knelt at his feet and asked to be admitted to the Second Order of St. Francis, and to labour for the reform of the First and Second Orders: "For the rule of the brothers and the rule of the sisters are one, being the rule of the Gospel."

The Pope and the cardinals were a little astonished, but they gave way before manifest signs of the will of God, and the Pope received Colette into the Second Order; he dispensed her from a noviciate, and named her Abbess-General and Reformatrice of the three Seraphic Orders, particularly the Clareesses; with full power to found new monasteries, and to choose confessors for the monasteries founded or reformed. The visitor-general of the reform was to be Père Henri de la Baume.

It is obvious there must have been something very striking about Colette for such powers to be granted to an unknown woman who was only twenty-five years of age. It is said she was so far from earth during this strange profession of hers, that she did not take in what the Holy Father was saying, and that when she was afterwards addressed as "abbess," she protested and wept. But the Bull was given—the date is the 17th of the Kalends of November, otherwise the 16th of October. There is no getting away from that fact.

But having satisfied our minds with dates and documents, let us refresh our hearts with a piece of tradition.

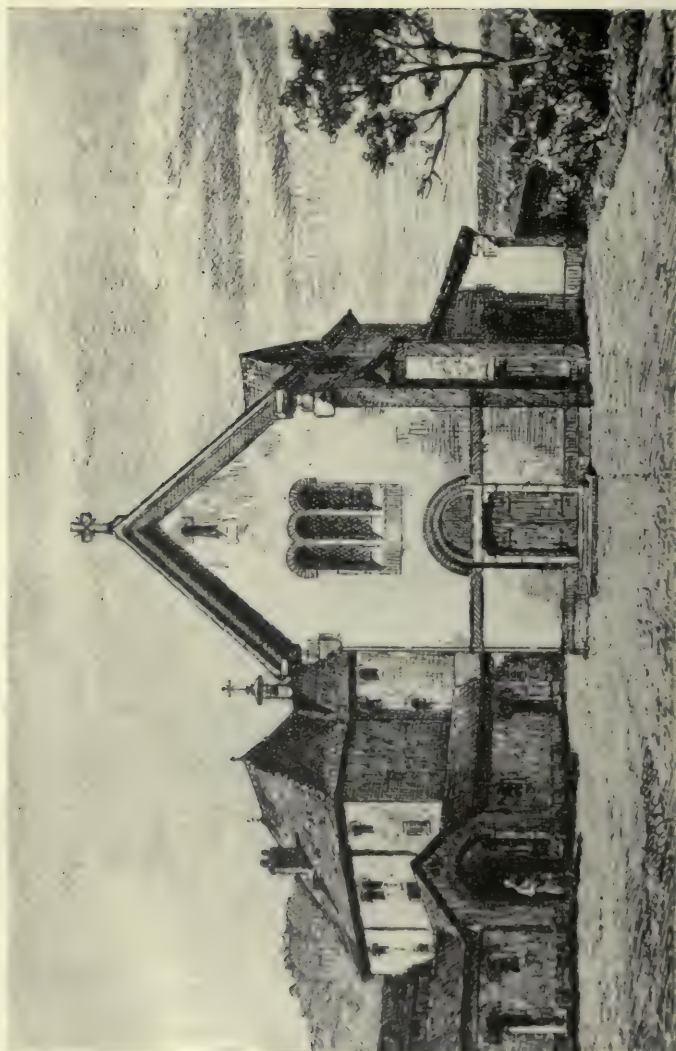
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After the ceremony the Pope turned to Father Henry and kissed his shoulder, saying : "Blessed shoulder that shall carry the bread for one so wondrous. Would that I were worthy to beg her food!" The "questing" brothers and sisters of St. Francis generally carry long bolster-like bags, which they throw over one shoulder.

They were wonderful women, these saints! St. Clare, running away through the night to the Portiuncula at the age of eighteen; St. Catherine of Siena bearding the Pope at Avignon, and ordering kings and cardinals about; St. Colette at twenty-five being in one day received into an Order and named abbess-general; St. Teresa from her cell writing books that have been the comfort and help of every devout Catholic soul in every country ever since! And yet we are ever being told by Protestants that nuns are useless craven creatures, mere cumberers of the ground: their only thought the salvation of their own souls!

Ah, well! St. Colette, with her swift white feet and her still white face, was out to save others! And she had need of all her courage to carry through the huge task she had been called upon to undertake. At Corbie, her native town, there was no longer honour and a home for her; the Benedictines closed their doors to her; the children jeered at her and called her witch; her former friends deserted her. Colette turned and went, and with her went only those two who knew her best and had shielded her hermitage—Marie Senechal and Guillemette Chrétien. It was the old story—a prophet is without honour in his own country. It was a useful test of Colette's powers of perseverance. Père Henri now guided the saint and her companions to the house of his brother, M. Allard, of Baume in Savoy. M. Allard gladly put part of his house at the disposal of the party, and his kindness was at once rewarded by a grace obtained by Colette. His wife was dangerously ill in child-birth;





BESANÇON.



the prayers of Colette were asked; she prayed, and the child was born and the mother lived. We shall come across this dear babe later under the name of Sister Perrine. Also the second daughter of Allard de Baume, Matilda, at once desired to join Colette, and in a corner of the great building a small noviciate was started, with Colette as abbess and novice mistress and choir sister all in one! Other young girls came to join very soon, and then Père Henri applied to his old friend Blanche, Countess of Geneva, and she gave the little community a house in the town. Here the recitation of the Divine Office on the two notes—a fall on the finals—which is still distinctive of the Colettines, was first commenced.

It is a pity that it has been impossible to discover the exact situation of this, the cradle of the reform. The first place we can trace the Colettines with certainty is at BESANÇON, where on the 14th of March, 1410, Colette took over the charge of a decayed convent of Urbanist Clares, in which only two sisters were left. Before Colette entered the convent she insisted on its endowments being diverted, as her love of poverty was as great as that of St. Clare herself. The archbishop of the diocese had arranged this, and he himself received the saint and her community, and formally enclosed them in this, their first convent.

St. Vincent Ferrar was at Besançon about this time, and the sympathy between the Franciscan and Dominican orders was again exemplified by his seeking out St. Colette and consulting her with regard to both spiritual and worldly things. Both saints were saddened by the schism in the Church and the anomaly of two Popes, and together they wrote a letter to the Council of Constance on peace in the Church. Also St. Colette showed St. Vincent a miraculous cross that had been given her from on high, and St. Vincent presented to her his mission cross that he had brought from Spain and used in preaching through France. Colette, coming out of an ecstasy, once told

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St. Vincent that God would call him to Himself in less than two years.

St. Vincent bowed his head. "In less than two years I shall go back to die in Spain," he said.

"In France," corrected Colette.

And even so, St. Vincent died at Vannes on the 5th of April, 1419.

At Besançon in the early days also took place one of the most notified miracles of the saint. An infant died at birth, unbaptized, and the parents were in great grief. The father brought the body to the convent (for the cures of Colette were already famous), and begged her prayers. She wrapped the body in her veil and prayed, and the child showed signs of life—upon which it was immediately baptized and handed back to the happy father. This child lived to grow up and join the Order of Poor Clares; at the time of her death she was Abbess of Pont-à-Mousson, Colette's last foundation.

Besançon passed through troublous times later on. In 1510 it suffered severely from fire, and afterwards from pestilence. Both these ills had been predicted by St. Colette. But in the seventeenth century we find the convent once more flourishing. The number of vocations granted was great, and to the joy of Colette many came from Corbie.

It soon became possible to make new foundations; the first was at AUXONNE, where the Duke of Burgundy gave her some land. She herself superintended the building of this convent, which was to be her ideal. It was small and humble, and the sisters' cells so narrow they could scarcely turn round in them. Sister Perrine described them later on as like hencoops! Agnes de Vaux was the first abbess.

Here for more than one hundred years the religious lived out their lives of prayer and penance, till in 1522 the Duke of Guise visited it and declared it too small and insanitary for the forty sisters then there, and insisted on

building a larger and more salubrious dormitory, where "near each bed there was a window."

A letter of Louis XIV, dated the 9th of June, 1711, gives us an authentic picture of this convent later on : "The community is composed of forty religious, choir sisters and externes, and of four friars who serve the church. . . . The poor nuns fast all their lives, in illness as well as in health."

At the time of the French Revolution this convent of the Ave Maria at Auxonne was demolished in part, and the religious ejected. Five of the nuns joined the Poor Clares at Lyons ; one, who was subject to mental derangement, remained at Auxonne with her friends, and went daily to kiss the ruins of her old cell. The better part of the convent having been turned into a hospital, this poor old nun had the happiness of dying within the walls she so loved, in the year 1809.

But Colette's stern eyes were on the friars minor of Dôle, a few miles from Auxonne. She wanted them to serve the convent of the Ave Maria, but there were tales of their laxness, and they had shown a certain surliness with regard to her overtures. Taking with her Père Henri, Colette went to visit them, addressed them in chapter, was visibly inspired, and the brothers were conquered and accepted her reforms. Père Henri lived on at Dôle, and from there made foundations of strict friars at Selliers in 1415 ; at De Chariez, 1420, and so on, so that in 1458 these brothers of the Colettine reform occupied eleven convents—one of which was the Ara Cœli at Rome.

The next foundation was at POLIGNY, again under the patronage of the Duchess of Burgundy, and with Blanche of Savoy to help instal the sisters. The same poor and mean style of building was maintained. Colette herself acted as abbess for the first seven years, and her own cell was so small she could only just stand upright in it. They still preserve at Poligny the wooden bowl from which the saint took her food. Sister Perrine, the niece



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of Père Henri, and one of Colette's first cures, appears in the list of the first eight inmates here. She must have been very young, and probably acted as secretary to Colette, and was not yet under vows. It is interesting to the hagiographer to notice that on three occasions at the founding of a convent, Colette is said to have miraculously discovered the necessary spring of water; also the following typical story is instructive: A young nun lay at the point of death and had received the last sacraments; she was remarkable for her fervent piety, and her loss would have been serious to the new foundation. Colette went up to the bed, and said: "My child, in the name of Jesus Christ I command you to arise." The nun instantly arose and followed the abbess to the choir and took her part in the Office. Similar miracles can be seen at Lourdes, and elsewhere, to this day.

The second abbess was Mère Claude Corcey.

The convent flourished so exceedingly that in 1481 another house had to be added. There was now room for twenty nuns.

Blanche, Countess of Savoy, was buried at Poligny by her own particular wish; for she desired to lie near Colette, and Colette had thought to die at Poligny. In the end it so happens that the bones of both these two friends are there to-day: those of Blanche of Savoy being found intact in their sepulchre after the destruction of the convent at the revolution, and those of St. Colette installed there (in the new church built on the old ruins) only seventy-two years ago.

The poor Duchess of Burgundy, with a view to expiating the deeds of her fierce husband (known as Jean-sans-peur), gave Colette another house of prayer at LEURRE, and there in 1422 seven nuns and twelve postulants were installed. The one house was too small, but two citizens came forward and gave the two neighbouring houses, and by 1429 a really fine monastery was in existence, with



a house for the friars, and a house for the extern sisters or Tertiaries. The first abbess was Mother Marie Sénéchal of Corbie, one of the saint's earliest followers; the second was Mother Agnes Vissemelle.

A chronicle of 1619 gives this charming picture of this convent. "Above all other virtues the nuns practise poverty and charity. In times of war they have lived for months on a little soup of herbs and some white cheese, and been as content as though they had the most luxurious meals. And as for charity, any religious passing by is given hot medicated water to wash the feet, and beautiful white linen to dry them. Hence in the convents of the district there is a common phrase, 'Charité de Leurre.'"

Let us run briefly over the other foundations of St. Colette: Moulins 1422, Aigueperse 1423, Decize 1424, Vevey 1425, Orbe 1428, Castres 1429, Lézignan 1431, Le Puy 1432, Beziers (reformed) 1433-1444, Hesdin 1442, Heidelberg 1444, Amiens 1445, Pont-à-Mousson 1447—in all eighteen. It was a heroic bit of work, and even though some of these have ceased to exist, literally hundreds of others have sprung from them, and the work of Colette goes on in all countries to-day.

Not one single convent was founded without difficulties, without tests of the saint's patience and perseverance. At Puys the people and the ecclesiastics were both hostile. "I trust in God," said Colette, "He will preserve me and what I have done for Him." "But," says the historian, "God had less patience. It was remarked that those who injured her came to sudden deaths!"

There were always of the greatest and noblest ladies of the land ready to take up this strict life of penance: a daughter of the Duke of Burgundy joined Puys; the eldest daughter of the Count de la Marche joined Aigueperse, the widowed Duchess of Valentinois joined Vevey. When Colette was on her way to Vevey she stayed with the Dominican nuns at Geneva; they all came forward to

welcome her with the kiss of peace—only one hung back with downcast head and lowered veil. Colette thought this was shyness and swiftly advanced, when she saw to her grief that the poor nun was a leper. The daughter of St. Francis, filled with pity, flung her arms round the afflicted nun, and gathering her to her breast bent over and kissed her. The leper was instantly cured. The Dominicans were full of admiration for Colette, and at their request she stayed some days with them, and helped them reform their rule.

It has been much debated of late whether the Blessed Joan of Arc and St. Colette ever met, and is still undecided. We give the opinion of Father William, O.S.F.C., on this subject—

“Franciscanism in the France of that day was entirely on the French side, from Friar Richard and St. Colette down to the humblest known Tertiary. It is a remarkable fact that St. Colette, who travelled so much in her great work of founding and reforming convents of the Second Franciscan Order, never attempted to extend her mission to that part of the country which was known to give its sympathy or allegiance to the English side. Although there is so far no definite proof that these two remarkable women ever met, it is very probable that they did so. St. Colette was certainly in Moulins when La Pucelle entered it after her capture of La Charité-sur-Loire, and we know that the saint was then in frequent and intimate correspondence with the mothers, wives and sisters of some of the great captains who rode in Joan’s train.”

The religious were often famine-stricken during these wars and sieges, but at that time none of the buildings seem to have suffered. And as for the hunger—they were used to that! And somehow their cruse was never empty when the poor came to the door. Some one gave Colette a little basket of eggs for the poor, and day after day Colette went to the basket and took out eggs and gave them away according to need, but yet the basket was never

empty; in the same way was the flour multiplied in another convent.

BEZIERS had been founded in 1240 in the lifetime of St. Clare, but it was under the Urbanist rule. Also the convent was without the city walls and in constant danger of attack. It had become necessary to get a house within the walls and to bring together the scattered nuns who had been dispersed during certain alarms. The King of Naples begged Colette to see to it, and she visited Beziers twice and secured the necessary enclosure and form of life to make the reform persist.

It must not be forgotten that besides all the practical foundations and the business connected with them, Colette had to frame her celebrated constitutions, and was in constant communication with the Minister-General of the Order and others on this subject. A first rough draft was made at Besançon between 1410 and 1412; another, more complete, at Auxonne; a third at Poligny, and the final one at Besançon in 1434. The originals were in Latin, but the saint made, or had made, under her direction, translations in French, which were sent to every convent. This in itself was no light work, and called for some power of mind as well as for spiritual insight.

The 1434 draft was sent by the hand of Père Pierre de Vaux to the Franciscan General, Guillaume de Casale, who was presiding over the chapter held that year at Thun. His reply, dated the 28th of September, is still kept at Poligny—the original is in Latin. He addresses Colette as his "very devout daughter in Jesus Christ," and says he has resolved not only to confirm, but also to approve and promulgate the constitutions, and give them the force of law. He adds a sort of postscript: "I strongly desire that the family of St. Francis be reformed through your means, to the glory of God and for the salvation of souls." Then adds a second postscript: "Make some reply."

The most fervent of the royal families who bowed to



Colette were the Bourbons. Isabelle, the eldest daughter of Jacques de Bourbon, King of Naples and Sicily, was the first of the family to don the brown habit; she was followed later by her youngest sister, the Princess Marie. Then Jacques de Bourbon, who had quarrelled with his wife and fled from Naples, was converted by St. Colette and became a fervid Tertiary, and when the death of his wife in 1435 made it possible, he took the three vows. His two daughters came from Vevey to Besançon to be present at his profession, and his natural son, young Claude d'Aix, also came. The youth was so moved by the sight of the humility and happiness of his father, that he also begged the brown robe, and went to Dôle to pass his noviciate. Directly after his profession he was struck by mortal sickness and died a holy death. The ex-king did not long survive his son; and when his last agony was near he begged to be carried into the Poor Clares' chapel, and there he received the holy Viaticum and the last anointing from the aged Père Henri. His last wish was that he might find his final resting-place at the feet of St. Colette. This death was a great blow to the saint: she was getting on in life now—fifty-seven years of age—and those white feet must have been less swift on their journeys after sinners, that white face must have been lined by many a care and sorrow.

And the blows fell fast now; in the next year came the death of her greatest earthly friend, Père Henri de la Baume. For thirty-five years he had been her faithful helper and support, and now in the seventy-third year of his age, his time had come to lay aside this burden of living. We have Colette's own letter to her daughters at Vevey, telling of Père Henri's death—

“My very dear and well-beloved sisters in God. As humbly as I can, with my soul prostrate before our Lord, I recommend myself to your prayers. I affectionately supplicate you to live in virtue and perseverance, and the



true observance of our rule. I must let you know news that has brought me great sorrow and bitter anguish of mind, and not without cause; for on Ash Wednesday, after Matins, our Rev. Father, Brother Henri, became worse of his illness, so much so, that on the Thursday, shortly before midnight, he was carried into our chapel, and there in the presence of our fathers and brothers and of me, he received very devoutly the Precious Body of Jesus Christ; and immediately after the sacrament of extreme unction. He then took leave of all the sisters and returned to his chamber, seeming to us rather better. The Saturday and Sunday he was very weak; and the Monday also, but he was able to spend the day in our chapel in great devotion and in full cognizance of the presence of God. He joined in the reading of the Passion and recommendations of the departing soul; and at half-past six, whilst praying to our Lord, his beautiful and glorious soul passed gently and devoutly to God our beneficent Creator. With all the power I have I recommend his soul to your prayers, that having loved him loyally when living, your love should now rather be augmented than lessened, and that you be all diligent in prayer to God for him, for you know he is worthy of it. Notwithstanding that I believe that he is better able to pray for us, than we for him. Also I recommend his beautiful soul to the devout father confessors, and to all my fathers and brothers; and with all my poor intentions I pray the Holy Spirit to conserve you in grace, and finally convey you to the glories of paradise. Amen.

"Written at Besançon, the 26th of February, 1439.

"SISTER COLETTE."

Père Henri was buried within the enclosure of the chapter, because Colette feared his tomb might be the resort of multitudes; for he had a great reputation for sanctity, and the crowds might have disturbed the services in the church.

The foundation at HEIDELBERG at the instigation of the Duke of Bavaria in 1440 was not a success, though the Duke's sister was first abbess. Probably the language difficulty was too great to be overcome, and the distance from the other reforms would make government difficult. So after some months Colette withdrew her nuns, and the building was given to the Friars Minor. They, in their turn, vacated it after about sixty years.

Colette returned from Heidelberg *via* Lorraine at the request of René the Good, Duke of Anjou, the father of that Margaret of Anjou who married our Henry VI and had such a stormy life on these shores. René possessed the Marquisate of PONT-Â-MOUSSON, and here he desired a convent of Poor Clares. Colette agreed, and plans were made; Colette went on to Hesdin and sent Brother Deschaux to direct the work, and the convent was only ready for occupation some months after the saint's death. It was here that the widowed Duchess Philippa de Gueldres was professed later on, when she had left her crown at Nancy, and handed the sceptre over to her eldest son. She was professed in 1520, and Leo X sent her a dispensation from some of the mortifications of the rule. She returned the Brief; she would never allow any relaxation, and fought hard to everywhere maintain the strictness of the rule, so that she is sometimes spoken of as a second Colette. She died at the age of eighty-five, after spending twenty-seven years in all the austerities of the cloister.

At HESDIN the saint was working at her noviciate house, and it was now the loss of bodily power was particularly marked by Sister Perrine; often when she was in a trance Sister Perrine had to support her, or she would have fallen. Colette's states of trance were often times of great spiritual distress and pain; she saw things evil as well as things good; she suffered much; and the sorrows of the

world bowed down her head. Sister Guillemette Chrétien was nominated first abbess at Hesdin in 1442.

Many years before the burghers of GHEENT had sent an invitation to Colette to come and make a foundation there, and she had answered that they must wait God's time. But on the 6th of August, 1443, she entered the city with her nuns, and the convent was opened under the name of Bethlehem, and Sister Odelle, the daughter of the Duke of Burgundy, was made abbess. There was already a convent of Poor Clares under the Urbanist rule in Ghent, founded by the Sister Ermentrude, to whom Clare wrote. They were prospering, and there was no question of reforming them: it was easier for Colette to found her own poor Bethlehem.

When Colette left Ghent she went to Besançon to see St. John Capistran, who was then General of the Reform. He wrote her an authorization for the work she was engaged on, which is dated the 22nd of November, 1442. These documents are interesting as showing that Colette was submissive to her Order and to Holy Church.

We come lastly to the foundation of AMIENS, made at the request of Philip of Saveuse, and of which the first abbess was Isabelle, the eldest daughter of Jacques de Bourbon. The convent was dedicated to St. George and St. Clare; its position was near the cathedral and opposite the church of St. Sulpice. Colette stayed here some time putting things in working order, and the little cell she occupied used to be kept vacant later and used as an oratory, until the expulsion of the Clares.

On page 312 will be found a translation of the vesper hymn of Colette, and the following passage from the sixth lesson shows the Church's estimate of her spiritual knowledge: "Being made illustrious by the power of prophecy, and being divinely taught, she penetrated the



hidden mysteries of faith, so as to discourse of them in the profoundest manner."

On the 6th of March, 1447, in her convent at Ghent, Colette died, having covered her face with her veil and composed her body. For three days Colette lay in state, and it is calculated that 20,000 persons passed through the church to look at her. Then she was buried in the common graveyard in her habit, and without any mound or stone to mark the spot. But the miracles for which she was famed in life persisted in death. In nearly all her convents she was seen either during the forty-eight hours of unconsciousness that preceded her actual passing or immediately after her death. At Castre she was seen in her oratory with rays of light about her head; at Orbe heavenly voices sang: "Sister Colette is gone to our Lord." We commend these visions to the members of the Society for Psychical Research. It seems so strange to us that water diviners, psychical researchers and science healers should have their stories of wonders accepted, and that the miracles of the Church should be shut out. It is obvious that it is not always want of faith, but sometimes prejudice, that leads people astray.

The following letter of St. Colette is often read aloud in the convents of her reform—

"Glory, honour and praise to the great Three in One. Amen. My dearest Sisters: By the love of our merciful Saviour Jesus Christ, and of His revered Bride, the Holy Church, filled with a deep humility, I commend myself to your prayers in life and in death; that the account I shall have to render to God on the last day, may be one favourable to me. My beloved sisters; the wisdom of our Heavenly Father has called you from the vanities and deceits of the world to a life of fervent devotion, and He has chosen you to be the brides of His beloved Son, children of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, and heirs



and queens of the heavenly kingdom. By a short and easy labour here, you will attain hereafter rest, honour and everlasting glory. Therefore, dear sisters, appreciate greatly your vocation, and the high dignity and great perfection to which you are called. Do not omit to meditate constantly on the holy career on which you have entered, by the grace of God and by your holy vocation. For, says our Divine Saviour, no one can come to Me, unless he is filled with the inspiration of My Heavenly Father. This happy entrance into a life of deep devotion consists in an entire renunciation of the world, the flesh, and our own will. As our Saviour teaches us : ' If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross ' ; and adds further ; ' Let him follow Me to the end.'

" Remember, my dear daughters, that by the grace of God you are called to observe perfect obedience even unto death. It will not be sufficient for you to do so for a time, or on some particular occasions. In order to practise this perfect obedience even to our last breath, by always submitting our will entirely to that of our superiors, let us fix our gaze on the Saviour of the world ; let us contemplate Jesus Christ, the eternal wisdom, who has been obedient for us even to the death of the cross. The truly obedient man has no other end but God, and accomplishes the will of his superiors as being that of Jesus Christ Himself. The more trifling the thing you are desired to do appears in the eyes of men, the more meritorious is your obedience before God. St. Bernard teaches us that he who is truly obedient, ought, according to the example of our Divine Saviour, to have a greater dread of a single disobedience than of death itself. He says, ' Remember, my beloved brethren, that Jesus Christ preferred sacrificing His life in the torments of His dolorous passion, to failing in obedience to the will of His eternal Father.' Another saint also has said that a single prayer of an obedient submissive man, is worth more than

a thousand prayers from one who is insubordinate and disobedient. Let us then renounce our own will, for it is truly the fuel of eternal fires. Above all things, I commend to you the virtue of holy obedience; it is in this we can best testify our love of God, by submitting in all things to the creature for the love of the Creator; it is by this that we die with Jesus Christ on the cross, in order to enjoy life eternal with Him. Amen.

“Besides this renunciation of ourselves by perfect obedience, our Divine Saviour requires us to carry our cross daily by the practice of our vow of poverty. It is doubtless a heavy cross to possess nothing on earth but only Him who has borne the cross upon His own shoulders; who died on it, fastened to it with nails, crowned with thorns, mocked, covered with spittle, His body bruised with blows, and His side pierced with a lance. O holy poverty, ensign of our abnegation, precious stone, mark of our salvation!

“Oh, my dear sisters, love, love and love with a perfect love this noble and beautiful virtue of holy poverty, dear to God and hated by the world. Imitate in this our Lord Jesus Christ, who had not where to lay His head; follow the example of our holy father St. Francis, and of our holy mother St. Clare; content yourself with the poor habit allowed by the rule; consider it hurtful to you to possess the least thing of your own, whether it be a book, a little thread, a rosary, needles, pins, linens, veils, or anything else. Limit yourself to what is absolutely necessary, and do not place your affections even on this. The cross of poverty which we must carry consists in abstaining always from meat, in fasting daily, in enduring cold and bare feet, in using a hard bed and coarse garments, in being satisfied with poor food, in giving ourselves up to labour of mind and body. Whoever, at the hour of death, is found possessed of anything, in fact, or even in will, cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. So, my beloved children, live and die in true poverty, as the Son of God

has died for us on the cross. I commend this virtue of poverty to you above all things, because it is the ladder by which we reach our heavenly kingdom by despising all earthly goods for the love of God, who is the Eternal Truth.

"Again, our Divine Lord has said : ' Follow Me ' : by which we understand that we should imitate Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb, the pure Son of a virgin mother, in observing faithfully the vow of chastity. This vow, while it confers on us an inviolable purity of soul and body, makes us brides of Jesus Christ. O sublime virtue of angelic purity ! cherished by God as His dear Spouse ; revered by the angels as the lady of their Lord and King exalted, and ratified by the holy Scriptures !

"My beloved children, it is for you that our Divine Saviour has lived on earth in obedience, poverty and chastity. He, who is the source of all virtue, was in a sepulchre for forty hours ; in this you are happy to imitate your dear Saviour ; for after you have made the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity, you make that of enclosure, in which you will live (perhaps for forty years, or more) and die. Thus, in virtue of this vow, you may consider yourselves even now as in your sepulchre. Oh ! how worthy of veneration is the sepulchre of our Saviour, which is visited with devotion by multitudes of the faithful ! How worthy of esteem also is your sepulchre, where so many souls retire in order to find eternal salvation ! O blessed enclosure, which preserves you from so many occasions of danger, and in which you may freely practise the most noble virtues ! In you is found perfect obedience, the daughter of humility, by which we renounce our own will, the real root of every evil. To the attacks of the world you oppose poverty, which preserves you from dissipation. To the perilous temptation of your domestic enemy, you oppose chastity, prayer, fastings, watchings, cold, bare feet, mortification of the senses, silence, tears, religious discipline, the divine office, the



holy sacrifice of the Mass, the remembrance of death, the cross and passion. Cast far from you your own will, and the inclinations of your corrupt nature. O happy enclosure! Abide in it, my dear children; never withdraw yourselves from it; fix there your dwelling and your only repose.

"Thank the most Holy Trinity, One God in Three Persons, for all the benefits which He has poured out upon you; above all for the adorable mystery of the Incarnation, by which our God, after He had made all things for us, has condescended further to take our nature and to become our Brother, in order to deliver us from death by the merits of His dolorous Passion. O incomprehensible love! O ingratitude of man! who so often forgets this love. My dear children, thank God also for all the graces which He has given you in holy baptism, for it is in this sacrament you were restored to original innocence, and became the temples of the Holy Ghost. The Divine mercy has gone yet further. After you have fallen into sin, it recalls you to penance and has led you, without considering your merits, into holy religion, where all that surrounds you edifies and assists you to good. Thank God, then, for all His mercies; praise Him without ceasing; love Him with a love worthy of Him. Praise and love the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, the most holy Virgin Mary, all the holy angels, all the saints and all the just souls who having served God faithfully have left this world in His love. The end of all things is at hand; charity has become cold; devotion is rare in the heart. Many make solemn promises to God, but few observe them faithfully; therefore, my dear children, renounce the world with your whole heart, and observe your holy vows inviolably and faithfully. It is far better not to make vows, than to fail in observing them faithfully. For, the more important the vow is, the more sinful is the transgression, and the more awful the judgment on the sinners. But, for the faithful soul, the greater the vow, the greater



is the merit of its observance and the recompense of glory which will be granted to you by the mercy of the Father, the passion of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the source of grace, of love, and of all consolation. Amen."

Forty-five years after the death of Colette, in the year 1492, the Provincial of the Franciscans had her body exhumed, and the bones enclosed in a case and buried again. One of the Poor Clares who assisted at the ceremony was the sister of the Bishop of Cambrai, and wrote and told him what had been done. The Bishop, desiring the relics should have better security, again had them exhumed and buried beneath a large, heavy stone, on which he had cut: "Here rests the body of the virtuous servitor of Jesus Christ, Sister Colette, first abbess and reformatrice of the Order of St. Clare, who died 1447, on the 6th day of March. She wished to have in this place and in this earth her humble tomb."

The desire for the beatification of the saint was strong, and here we come to one of the strangest anomalies that this chronicle can show us—it was Henry VIII of England who in 1513 wrote one of the strongest letters to Leo X in favour of the canonization of the carpenter's daughter—

"TO OUR MOST HOLY AND MOST CLEMENT LORD,  
POPE LEO X.

"Most Holy Father, humbly prostrate before your Holiness I kiss your feet with the most profound respect.

"Since our arrival in Belgium we have heard resounding on all sides the praises of the glorious virgin Colette, celebrated for the purity, simplicity and innocence of her life, and also for her admirable zeal and charity. For it is she who has enriched not only Belgium, but also France, Burgundy, Savoy and other countries, with monasteries founded by her care and industry under the

direction of the Holy Spirit ; and she has filled them with chaste virgins who continually offer to God the sacrifice of praise.

"Every day multitudes of the faithful are seen hurrying to her tomb, who find there the accomplishment of their prayers and solace for their griefs. On this account it appears astonishing to us that this holy woman has not yet been inscribed in the number of holy virgins. We therefore come ourselves, most holy Father, to lay our ardent desire at the feet of your Holiness, and to beseech you most earnestly to enrol this blessed Colette in the number of the holy virgins, after your Holiness has proved the authenticity of the virtues and marvels attributed to her.

"This solemn act will serve for the advancement of our holy religion and the honour of Colette, and will consecrate to immortality the name of your Holiness.

"May the Most High grant to your Blessedness perfect health, and the accomplishment of your desires.

"Your devoted and most obedient son,

"HENRY.

"From our city of Tournai, the 25th of September, 1513."

But the time was not yet.

In the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists, we read : "Clement VIII, by his diplomate in the year 1604, granted to the abbess of the monastery of St. Clare at Ghent, that the office in honour of the same Blessed Colette, *de communi unius Virginis*, should be recited by them yearly on the day of her death, and that they should have the power freely and lawfully of causing Mass to be celebrated on the same day in their own church to her honour, and similarly *de communi unius Virginis*."

This was the informal canonization, as it were. The formal canonization did not take place till the 24th of May, 1807, when Pius VII issued the decree, and himself

preached the panegyric in the Basilica of St. Peter. Meanwhile the Colettines had gone through many dangers and trials for the preservation of the relics of their beloved foundress. In 1577 the nuns of Ghent had to fly before the Gueux; they took the bones with them, and found a refuge with the Poor Clares of Arras. In 1587 the nuns returned to Ghent; their convent was in ruins, but the pious people rebuilt it for them, and showed great devotion towards the relics of the saint. In 1643 Father Sylvester came to the nuns and begged a portion of the relics for the altar of the new church at Corbie.

In 1783 the Poor Clares were again expelled from Ghent by the Emperor Joseph II, and had to take refuge at the Poligny convent. France hesitated to grant them shelter, but the queenly and saintly Carmelite, Madame Louise, aunt of Louis XVI, and in religion Sr. Teresa of St. Augustine, appealed to her nephew on their behalf.

There was great difficulty about the safe-conduct of the relics: the people of Ghent did not wish to part with them, whereas the nuns felt that their saint must share their exile. At last they were formally consigned to Madame Louise, who as formally reconsigned them to Poligny, only keeping one small bone for her convent at St. Denis. In 1791 the sisters thought it safe to return to Ghent, so those strong enough set out for the return: several had died. They left the relics behind them.

But if the death of Joseph II had brought religious peace to Belgium, the French Revolution now brought terror to the religious houses in France. It was the turn for the nuns of Poligny to fly—and so suddenly they could not take the saint's relics with them: they could only place them in the village church of St. Hyppolite in the care of the curé. One of the nuns remained at Poligny hidden in the house of her parents, and she kept watch over the relics.



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One day, when passing a club where the Revolutionists met, she heard cries of "Let us burn Mademoiselle Colette and Monsieur Hyppolite!" At great personal risk this nun (whose name was Constance Parpandet) entered the club and stayed long enough to learn that the proposal was to burn the parish church next day. With the help of friends the relics were removed that night and buried under some refuse of a broken wall of the church. When the Revolutionists came the next day and found no relics, they decided not to burn the church, but to turn it into a temple for the Goddess of Reason. The poor nun saw this work begun, and the workmen drawing nearer to clearing out the corner where the relics were hid. Then one night with bare feet she entered the church secretly and carried off the casket to her own house. For some years the precious casket was hidden in different houses in Poligny; for on account of the domiciliary investigations of the Friends of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, it was not safe to leave it long in one place; but at last in 1801 the churches were restored to their own use, and in 1804 the relics were solemnly restored to their place, and Constance Parpandet was present on that occasion.

The former abbess of Poligny had found a refuge with the Poor Clares of Romans, and now there was once more peace, she returned to Poligny with some of her hostesses, who had offered their help. The people of the city welcomed them warmly and built them a monastery on the old site; Mother Gertrude, now well on in years, herself superintending and urging on the workers. In 1819 they entered the monastery; the convent church was not finished till some years later, after the death of Mother Gertrude; but on the 12th of December, 1822, the aged Sister Constance assisted at the final translation of the relics of Colette from the parish church to the monastery, where they still remain at the date of writing—the 1st of January, 1912. With what doubt one puts the date!



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For the poor nuns live ever in dread of expulsion : however calm their days are, they can never feel any security for the morrow. It seems strange indeed that these silent harmless women may not pursue in peace their life of prayer.

## CHAPTER IX

### CLARES OF GREAT BRITAIN

THE first settlements of Clares in England were made from France at the end of the thirteenth century. Thus Wadding, under date 1286, gives "Novum Castrum super Tynam dieu Dunelmensis in Anglia"—the only note we have of this early honour to Newcastle-on-Tyne. Of several houses—such as Preston—only some passing mention can be found, but of four (*Minories*, *Waterbeach*, *Denney* and *Brusyard*) we have managed to collect quite a number of interesting details. It is particularly notable that the names of families who were connected with the Clares before the dissolution can still be found in the roll of Clares of to-day.

The fatal fault of these early Clares seems to have been to attempt to pander to the English commercial spirit, and to deviate from the strict path of poverty wherein alone can the Poor Clare find prosperity.

The first and most important foundation was in LONDON, in the street near Aldgate which is still called the "Minories" after seven hundred years. We quote first from Dugdale—

"Nuns Minoresses of London : an elaborate account of this House, by Rev. Dr. Fly, the incumbent of the Church which has arisen upon its site, was communicated to the Society of Antiquaries in 1803, and printed in the XVth Vol. of the *Archæologia*. From this and other authorities we learn that Blanche, Queen of Navarre, wife to Edmund Earl of Lancaster, having encouraged some poor ladies of the new order of St. Clare, or Minoresses, to come into England, the said Edmund obtained leave of

his brother, King Edward the First, A.D. 1293, to build on the east side of the street leading from the Tower to Aldgate, without the walls of the City, an Abbey for those Nuns, to the honour of the Blessed Virgin and St. Francis.

"The first endowment appears to have consisted of three tenements and four parcels of ground in the immediate vicinity of the House, with a rent of thirty pounds a year, issuing out of estates in London, in St. Lawrence's Market, near West Cheap, in Cordwainer's Street, and at Dowgate.

"Three different Bulls were procured for these Nuns, soon after the foundation of their House, from Pope Boniface VIIIth; the first two in 1294, releasing them from all jurisdiction but that of the Papal See; the third regulating the internal government and conduct of the Society. In 1316, the endowment being found inadequate to the support of the House, King Edward the Second released these Nuns from all tallage payable to the Crown for their lands. In 1320 they were allowed to receive various additional tenements, partly of the gift of Henry Sales, citizen of London. Dr. Fly enumerates various other donations of a smaller kind to this House, during the reigns of King Edward the Third and King Richard the Second. Henry the Fourth granted to them the custody of the manor or alien Priory of Apuldercombe in the Isle of Wight, during the then war between England and France, which was afterwards granted to them in perpetuity, under letters patent of the 22nd Henry VI. They had general Confirmation, also, of their privileges and possessions from King Henry IV, King Henry V, King Henry VI, and King Edward IV. In the last of these reigns, too, one or two messuages were added to their possessions."

The next document is particularly interesting—

"Eliz. Horwode was Abbess of the Minorities in the time of Edward IV. Among the Harleian MSS., No. 2397, is Hilton's Scale of Perfection of the Reformyng of

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Mannys Soule," on a leaf at the end of which is written :  
"Dame Elizabeth Horwode, Abbass of the Minoresse off  
London to her gostle comfforthe bowzt thys Boke, hyt to  
remayne to the use of the Systerrs of the said place to  
pray for the Gever, and for the sowles of her fader and  
her moder, Thomas Horwode, and Beatrix, and the sowle  
of Maistre Roberton Alderton."

Walter Hilton, D.D., was a Carthusian in the time of Henry VI, and this book of his, *Scala Perfectionis*, was first published from W. de Worde's press in 1494. Another edition of 1506 is entitled "A devoute Boke compyled by Master Walter Hilton to a devoute Man in temporall Estate how he shulde rule him." We like to think that a devout woman in a religious state appreciated this early contemplative piece of literature. We know of no modern edition of this interesting work.

In 1515, in a time of pestilence in London, no fewer than twenty-seven nuns, besides lay-sisters, died in this convent.

It was surrendered to the King by Elizabeth Savage, the last abbess, 30th Henry VIII. The site was granted, 31st Henry VIII, to John Clerk, Bishop of Bath and Wells. Having reverted to the Crown, it was again granted out, 6th Edward VI, A.D. 1553, to Henry, Duke of Suffolk. Its further descent to later times may be seen in Dr. Fly's *Memoir*, pp. 111-112.

Tanner has given numerous references to public records concerning this house of the Minoresses, to which the reader is referred. Its annual revenues at the suppression were worth £311 15s. 1d., MS. Val. ; £318 8s. 5d., Dugd. ; £342 5s. 10½d., Speed ; £418 8s. 5d., Leland and Stow.

Stow, in his *Account of Portsoken Warde*, says that the length of this abbey contained fifteen perches and seven feet, as appeared by a deed dated A.D. 1303.

In March 1797 a fire which consumed or damaged many of the buildings south of the church here from the main street laid open large remains of the conventual offices than



had been before visible, particularly of a spacious apartment supposed to have been the refectory. Other remains are to be seen worked into different houses on the west side of Haydon Street.

Stevens's *History of Abbeys and Monasteries* (additional volumes to Dugdale's *Monasticon*, 2062 c. in Reading Room) has old prints of "A Minoreess or Franciscan Nun with her Mantle" (p. 159), "A Minoreess or Poor Clare without her Mantle" (p. 160), "Monastery of Minoreesses or Poor Clares without Aldgate."

"From the west part of *Tower-Hill* towards Aldgate, being a long continued Street, amongst other smaller Buildings in that Row, there was some time an Abbey of Nuns of the Order of *St. Clare*, called the *Minories*, founded by *Edmund*, Earl of *Lancaster*, *Lœicester*, and *Derby*, brother to King *Edward I*, in the year 1293, the Length of which Abbey contain'd 15 Perches, and seven Foot, near unto the King's-Street, or Highway, etc. as appears by a Deed dated 1303. A Plague of Pestilence being in this City, in the year 1515, there dy'd in this House of Nuns profess'd, to the Number of 27, besides other Lay-People, Servants in the House. This House was valu'd to dispend 418*l.* 8*s.* 5*d.* yearly, and was surrender'd by Dame Elizabeth Savage, the last Abbess there, unto King Henry VIII, in the 30th year of his Reign and of *Christ* 1539.

"In Place of this House of Nuns are built divers fair and large Store-Houses for Armour and Habiliments of War, with divers Work-Houses serving to the same Purpose. There is also a small Parish-House for the Inhabitants of the Close, called Holy Trinity.

"Near adjoining to this Abbey, on the South side thereof, was some time a Farm, belonging to the said Nunnery, etc." (Stow's *Survey of London*, p. 118).

"Note. That this Farm last above mention'd, appears to be the same lately call'd Goodman's Fields, since built into handsome streets, for Stow says it belong'd to one

Goodman, and was by him let out to grazing. It is a gross mistake here, and in what follows to call this an Abbey, and the Superioress an Abbess, because those of this Order never use those Names. Leland, in his *Collectanea*, Vol. I, says the same as above concerning the Founder, Valuation, and Suppression of this Nunnery (see the *Monasticon*, Vol. I, p. 542, and of the English Abridgement, p. 67)."

Francis de Sta. Clara, in *Hist. Frat. Min.*, p. 18, writes thus of this monastery—

"In the year 1293, under King Edward I, was built and endow'd the Monastery of the Poor Clares, to this day call'd the Minoresses, by the Lady Blanch, Queen of Navarre, and her Husband, Earl of Leicester, Brother to King Edward I. This Monastery was call'd *the House of Grace of St. Mary*, and was possess'd of the Church of *Hertingdon*, with all its Profits, which was of the Patronage of the noble *Edmund*, Brother to King *Edward*. It had also great Privileges from the Popes. Elizabeth, Mother to King Edward III, dy'd in this Order, and was bury'd at the Franciscans in London."

The two charters of King *Edward I*, licensing the founding and endowing of this nunnery, are in the Appendix, Vol. II, Num. I F. and I F. (in Latin).

"*Minoresses*, their Nunnery at London.

"King *Edward I*, in the first year of his Reign, granted his Licence of *Mortmain* to his Brother Edmund, for him to give and assign a Place he had in the Parish of *St. Botolph* without *Aldgate* to the Nuns of the Order of *Minors*, to be brought into England by Blanch, Queen of Navarre, his said Brother's wife, there to serve God, the Blessed Virgin, and *St. Francis*; and allow'd the said Nuns to receive the same, without being disturb'd on Account of the Statute of *Mortmain*."

Stow tells (of the Minorities)—

"Neare adjoyning to the Abbey on the south side thereof was sometime a Farme belonging to the said Nunnes, at

which same I myself in my youth have fetcht many a halfe pennie worth of Milke, and never had lesse than three ale pints for a half pennie in the winter, always hot from the Kine, as the same was milked and strained.

"One Trolop and afterwards Goodman was the Farmers there, and had thirtie or fortie kine to the Pail.

"Goodman's son, being heyre to his father's purchase, let out the ground first for grazing of horse, and then for garden plots and lived like a gentleman thereby."

Our last reference is from Froissart's *Chronicles*, and is useful as showing the reputation of this convent for riches. The whole section is given because of the historical sketch of the times which makes it more easy to understand the position and difficulties of the Clares, and also the disposition of the people towards nuns and nunneries—

"There fell about this time in England, an event that gave great displeasure to the earl of Buckingham when he heard of it. I will explain to you what it was. Humphrey, earl of Hereford and Northampton, and constable of England, was one of the greatest lords and landholders in that country; for it was said, and I, the author of this book, heard it when I resided in England, that his revenue was valued at fifty thousand nobles a-year. From this earl of Hereford there remained only two daughters as his heiresses; Blanche the eldest, and Mary her sister. The eldest was married to Thomas of Woodstock, earl of Buckingham. The younger was unmarried, and the earl of Buckingham would willingly have had her remain so, for then he would have enjoyed the whole of the earl of Hereford's fortune. Upon his marriage with Eleanor, he went to reside at his handsome castle of Pleshy, in the county of Essex, thirty miles from London, which he possessed in right of his wife. He took on himself the tutelage of his sister-in-law, and had her instructed in doctrine; for it was his intention she should be professed a nun of the order of St. Clare, which had a very rich and



*large convent in England.* In this manner was she educated during the time the earl remained in England before his expedition into France. She was also constantly attended by nuns from this convent, who tutored her in matters of religion, continually blaming the married state. The young lady seemed to incline to their doctrine, and thought not of marriage.

“ Duke John of Lancaster, being a prudent and wise man, foresaw the advantage of marrying his only son, Henry, to the lady Mary ; he was heir to all the possessions of the house of Lancaster in England, which were very considerable. The duke had for some time considered he could not choose a more desirable wife for his son than the lady who was intended for a nun, as her estates were very large, and her birth suitable to any rank ; but he did not take any steps in the matter until his brother of Buckingham had set out on his expedition to France. When he had crossed the sea, the duke of Lancaster had the young lady conducted to Arundel castle ; for the aunt of the two ladies was the sister of Richard, earl of Arundel, one of the most powerful barons of England. This lady Arundel, out of complaisance to the Duke of Lancaster, and for the advancement of the young lady, went to Pleshy, where she remained with the countess of Buckingham and her sister for fifteen days. On her departure from Pleshy, she managed so well that she carried with her the lady Mary to Arundel, when the marriage was instantly consummated between her and Henry of Lancaster. During their union of twelve years, he had by her four handsome sons, Henry, Thomas, John and Humphrey, and two daughters, Blanche and Philippa.

“ The earl of Buckingham, as I said, had not any inclination to laugh when he heard these tidings ; for it would now be necessary to divide an inheritance which he considered wholly as his own, excepting the constableness which was continued to him. When he learnt that his brothers had all been concerned in this matter, he became



melancholy, and never after loved he the duke of Lancaster as he had hitherto done."

We turn to *Dugdale* for the best account of the Abbey of Nuns Minoresses at WATERBEACH in Cambridgeshire—

"The lady Dionysia de Monte Canusio or Mountchensey, A.D. 1293, built here, to the honour of the Piety of the blessed Virgin Mary and St. Clare, this Abbey. Tanner says she had a grant of the manor of Waterbeche, and licence to found a house of religion therein ten or eleven years before, but the Minoresses were not resolved upon till 22 Ed. I. The Nuns here were removed about A.D. 1348, as has been already mentioned, by Mary, Countess of Pembroke, to a religious House of the same order, then lately founded by her at Denney in Cambridgeshire. Joanne de Nivernis occurs Abbess of Waterbeche in 1294, and Joanne de Trengre in Ed. III. The advowson of the Church of Ridgewell in Essex was granted to this House in the 24th Ed. I."

"Waterbecham Nunnery of the Order of St. Clare in Cambridgeshire.

"King Edward I, in the 22d Year of his Reign, granted Leave to *Dionisia de Monte Canisio* to found a Monastery of Nuns of whatsoever order she pleas'd in the Manor of Waterbeche, which she held of him *in Capite*, and that the Religious there founded might hold the same as a perpetual Alms, from all Secular Service, and that she might bring from beyond the Sea as many Sisters of the said Order as she thought fit: Verify'd by Inquisition the 29th Year of King Edward I.

"King Edward III confirm'd this Grant to the said Nunnery of St. Mary and St. Clare at Waterbeche, being Minoresses."

There is also some detail about Waterbeche in *Stevens's Abbeyes and Monasteries*—

"Nunnery of Minoresses, or of the Order of St. Clare, in the County of Cambridge.

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"*Dionysia de Monte Caniso*, Lady of *Anesty*, in the County of Cambridge, gave the Manor of *Waterbeche* to *Joanna de Nevers*, Abbess, and the Convent of *Waterbeche*, and is the original Foundress in the Reign of King *Edward I.*

"The Witnesses to the Donation were, *William* Bishop of *Ely*, *Robert de Vere*, Earl of *Oxford*, and *Hugh* his Son; *Reginald de Argentein*; *Hugh Walsington*, then Sheriff of *Cambridgeshire*; *Richard Frevile*; *Henry Colevile*, *William Crikecot*, *John Wanthaump*, *Thomas de Scalaries*, *Henry Lacy*, *Ralph* the Son of *Felton*; *Simon Gradenham*, Knights.

"*Mary* of *St. Paul*, Countess of *Pembroke*, obtain'd a Grant of *Edward II.* for translating the Nuns, with their Possessions, from *Waterbech* to the Abbey of *Deneye*, whereof she had been the first Foundress, and thus the Union came to pass.

"The Witnesses to the Donation of the Manor of *Histon*, which *Philip Tilney*, Knight; *John Brove*, and *Walter Goddard* granted to the Abbey of *Deneye*, in the Reign of King *Richard II.* Lord *Hugh de la Zouche*, *William Cheney*, Knight; *Richard Stukeley*, Knight; *Robert Paris*, *Simon Wythame*."

Our last document with reference to this foundation is from the donation deed of the church of *Goderston* in the county of *Norfolk*—

"We *Mary* of *St. Paul*, Countess of *Pembroke*, Lady of *Weyseford* and *Montinae*."

And in the same—

"For the Health of the Soul of Lord *Adamar de Valentia*, once Earl of *Pembroke*, our Husband, and of the Souls of *Guido de Casteliom*, late Earl of *St. Paul*, our Father, and of *Mary de Sorctamen*, alias *Britann*, my Mother.

"*Adamar Dascellis*, among the witnesses.

"*Elizabeth Throgmerton*, late Abbess of *Deney*.

"They have the Manor of *Hibal*, in the County of

*Cambridge.* They have the Manor of *Stroode* in *Kent*."

It has generally been supposed that *all* the nuns of Waterbeach were transferred to Denney, but this was probably not so; for we find at the time of the dissolution that there were twenty-five nuns of *some* Order at Waterbeach, and that their revenue was estimated at £172. The convent was suppressed.

The remains of the nunnery are now used as a farm, the refectory being converted into a barn.

The best account of the foundation of DENNEY, a hamlet close to Waterbeach, where Lady Pembroke installed Poor Clares, has been translated for us from Dugdale's *Monasticon*—

"Denney, Abby in Cambridgeshire.

"In the last Year of Nigellius, Bishop of Ely, being the Year 1169, one Robert, Chamberlain to the Earl of Britany, being sick to Death, receiv'd the Habit of Religion of the Monks of Ely, and gave to them for ever the Cell of Denney, which he had founded, and they were in Possession of, and confirm'd it by Deed, and then the Monks of Ely purchas'd of Albricus Picot his Part of Denney, Elmeney still remaining to them, with the Land given them by the Father of the said Albricus in the Town of Beche, being six Acres.

"The aforesaid Bishop Nigellus confirm'd the same. The Charter of King Edward III, dated Anno 1341, confirms the Grant made by Mary of St. Paul, Countess of Pembroke, by which she conferr'd all the Manor of Denney on the Nuns of St. Clare, or the Minoresses; and by another Charter the said King confirms to the same Nuns the Manor of Strode, of the Gift also of the aforesaid Mary of St. Paul: His 3rd Charter confirms to them the Advowson of the Abbey of Waterbeche of the same Order, and from the same Benefactress. King



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Henry IV ratify'd those and all other Grants made to this Monastery.

"Robert, Chamberlain to the Earl of Richmond, granted to these Monks of St. James, and St. Leonard, in the Isle of Denny, two parts of Elmeney, his lands at Beche; the 9th Earl of Wilburham and Wendey, and the Churches of Wendey, Wilburham, and Kirkbey, desiring his Children to add to the same, and wishing that if any of his Heirs should diminish his said Alms, he might be from his Mouth accurs'd in the Sight of God, and condemn'd in the dreadful Judgment, unless he repented. Conan Duke of Britany and Earl of Richmond, confirm'd this Grant.

"Albericus Picot, upon the complaints of these Monks who had been first settled in the Isle of Elmeney, they being there much incommoded by the Waters, gave them 4 Acres and a half in the Island of Denny, being a higher Ground, for their Monastery and Gardens, still confirming to them the Possession of Elmeney."

Edward III wrote a Latin letter to the General of the Brothers Minor, in which occurs the following phrase: "When the Abbess of Deney heard that her nuns who had been sent forth in different directions were gathering together without her reach, and would thus bring the place which had been under her rule to disgrace, she sternly forbade them to do it; and we rejoice in that they obeyed her commands with humility and devotion" (*Monumenta Franciscana*). It is certain some of the nuns wished to remain at Waterbeach, and were encouraged by some friars to do so. Whether they really *all* obeyed their abbess and followed her to Denney, as Edward says, is rather doubtful.

Tanner's account of Denney is as follows—

"About A.D. 1160, Robert, the Chamberlain to Conan Duke of Britanny and Earl of Richmond, became monk



at Ely, and gave a small island called Elmeney, in the parish of Beche, to that convent, but they, being mightily incommoded by the Water, Aubrey Picot gave them some acres on a higher situation in the isle of Deneye, where they settled, and had a church dedicated to St. James and St. Leonard, before the Death of Bishop Nigell, which happened A.D. 1169. These Benedictines from Ely do not seem to have continued here long, for in the next century there were persons of another order, viz. Templars, for in the taxation of this diocese of Ely, made A.D. 1255, the *Templarii de Daneye*, or the *Fretres Daneye*, occur often as owners of lands in several parishes within the Deanery of Chesterton. Within less than a hundred years after that we meet with a third sort of Religious in this place; for King Edward the Third, having given the Manor of Denney to Mary de St. Pauls (or Pol), widow to Adomere, Earl of Pembroke, she first designed to give it to the Abbey of Waterbeche, but afterwards altered her mind, and 15 Edward III founded here a Monastery for an Abbess and Nuns Minoresses to the honour of the blessed Virgin Mary and St. Clare, to which within a few years Waterbeche was united, so that about the time of the general Dissolution, there were in Denney Abbey twenty-five Nuns, who were endowed with lands to the yearly value of £172 8s. 3½d., Dugdale; £218 0s. 1½d., Speed; the greatest part of which, with the site of the monastery, passed from the Crown, 31st Henry VIII, to Edward Elrington."

Burnet, *Hist. Reform.*, Vol. I, p. 224, says this was one of the thirty-one monasteries which were reprieved for two years to satisfy the discontents of the people.

The following names of Abbesses of Denney have occurred to the present editors: Isabella Kendale occurs 6th Henry IV; Agnes Bernard, 1414; Margaret Mille or Milly, 1419 and 1431; Katherine Sybyle, 1434; Joane, August 12, 1459; Joane Keteryche, February 3, 1468; Margaret Assheby, 20th Edward IV, 1480; she occurs

5th Henry VII; Elizabeth Throchmorton, the last abbess.

In Coles's time there were considerable remains of Denney Abbey, situated about a mile and a half to the north-west of Waterbeach church. Buck engraved but a small portion of them in 1730.

The arms of Denney Abbey were the same as those of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, of which Mary de St. Pol was also the foundress. Cole, Vol. XLVI, has given a rude sketch of the seal, large and oval."

Here is a more modern account—

"Denney Nunnery of *Minoresses* in *Cambridgeshire*.

"Founded by the Lady *Mary de Valence*, Countess of *Pembroke*, Baroness of *Veister* and *Montenatt*, Daughter to *Guy Chastillon*, Earl of *St. Paul* in *France*, and his wife, *Mary*, the Daughter of *John* the 2nd Duke of *Britany*, and Earl of *Richmond* by his wife *Beatrice*, the daughter of King *Henry III*, third wife to *Andomar de Valence*, Earl of *Pembroke*, is reported to have been the same day, maid, wife and widow, her Husband *Andomar* being on the wedding-day kill'd at a tilting. She was, however, left his Executrix, and being struck with the unfortunate death of her Husband, gave herself up to a religious Life, bestowing most of her Possessions on religious Uses, part on Churches, part on the Poor, and part on her Servants. Among her other pious works was the founding of this Nunnery, to which she brought Nuns from *Waterbeach*, and endow'd it with considerable Lands, and the Manor of *Stroud* in *Kent*" (Parker's *View of Cambridge* in his Account of *Pembroke Hall*).

"*Mary* of *St. Paul* sometimes liv'd in the Monastery of *Duste*, in the County of *Hertford*.

"The Manor of *Deneye* was given among other things to *Mary* of *St. Paul* by the King, on Account of her quitting to the King the Claim and Right she had to the

*Manors of Hertford, Haverford, Hegham-Ferrars, Moremuth, and Kenenah.*

"The Manor of *Stroode* in *Kent*, near *Rochester*, was given to *Mary* of *St. Paul*, in Favour of her daughter, *Joanna* of *Wodestoke*, whom she bred, and carefully observ'd " (*Leland's Collect.*, Vol. I, pp. 98-99).

The story of the nuns of *Denney* offers us also a very typical light on the story of the dissolution of the monasteries. We have a letter from the notorious *Dr. Legh*, saying how all the weeping nuns came out to meet him and desired to be free; also a tale about a married nun who wished to return to her husband, which, as married women were not, and never have been, received into the Order of *St. Clare*, must be credited to the imagination of *Dr. Legh*. We shall give the whole letter, which deals with more scandalous aspersions on the nuns of *Sopwith*, because we believe in the whole truth, and we desire to face all the evil that was said or may now be said. Note also the explanatory additions of *Johan ap Rees*!

The second letter is, it so happens, from these same weeping nuns, pressing that, because of their good reputation, they may be allowed to remain at *Denney*, a request that was granted for the time being; though on the 28th of August, 1536, *Denney* was finally suppressed, there being then twenty-five nuns in residence, and the revenue placed at £218.

Sir Henry Ellis, Letter CCCIV.

"Doctor Thomas Legh and John ap Rees to Secretary Cromwell. Their visitation at Cambridge, *Sopham Nun-nery*, and *Denney*—

"Also being at a Noonrie hereby called *Sopham*, we found nother tolerable sorte of lyving nor good administracōn there, but all ferre out of order. The Ladie there hathe given a benefice being appropriated to the House, of the yerely valewe of XXX<sup>li</sup>., to a Fryer, which they saye she loves well, the House not being able to dispende fully



Cl. in all. The said Frier is noted of the comon rumor of all the contrey hereabouts and also of all the susters of the said House to be nought with the Prioeres there. And to make you laugh, we sende you a lettre which is supposed not without sure conjectures to be sent unto her from the said Fryer, as in the name of a woman, although any man maye soone perceve that it cam from a lovier. Wherby ye maye perceve her conversacōn. Then the Prioeres and all wold have goon foorth yf we had suffred theym. And they had doon all catall, corne and householde stuff for that intent.

"And at Denny also, there we founde half a dozen of full moste instantly desired with wepyng eyes to goo foorth, amongst whome one is a faire yong woman, suster to Sr Gyles Strangwige, which was and is maryed to one Ryvel, a merchant Ventrer, at London, with whom she had iiij children, and nowe moved of scruple of conscience, as she saith, desireth most humbly to be dismissed and restored to her husbände. And so by this ye may see that they shall not nede to be put foorth, but that they woll make instance theymself to be delivered. So that their doing shal be imputed to theymself and to no other. And theis at Denye doo importunately crie that they lyve here dayli against their conscience, and therfor doo loke for an answer of yo<sup>r</sup> pleasure in that behalf. And thus Allmightie God have yo<sup>r</sup> Mastership in his most blessed tuicion. From Denye, the XXX<sup>th</sup> of October.

"Yours ever assured

"THOMAS LEGH D."

"Sr, although I reken it well doon that all were out, yet I thinke it were best that at their own instante sute they might be dimised to avoyde calumnacion, and envie. And so compelling theym to observe theis injunctions ye shall have theym all to doo shortely. And the people shall knowe it the better that it cometh upon their sute, yf they be not straight discharged while we be here. For



than the people wolde saye that we wente for no other cause about than to expell theym, though the truth were contrarie. For they juge all thing of the effectes that followeth, and not allways of the trueth.

"Your most bounden servant,

"JOHN AP RESS."

Gairdner, J., *Letters and Papers*, Vol. IX (1094).

"The Abbess and Convent of Brosiarde to Cromwell.

"We, your oratrices and humble subjects, thank you for your worshipful letter, whereby you have comforted us desolate persons. We assure you we have not alienated the goods of our house, or listened to any but discreet counsel. We have not wasted our woods beyond the usage of our predecessors in time of necessity. We beg you to intercede for us with the King, our founder, that we may continue his bedewomen, and pray for him, the Queen and Princess.

"P. 1. Add. Secretary. Endd."

The writer of the above was Elizabeth Throgmorton, at one time a nun at Ghent, and belonging to a noted Catholic family. Her prayers and example are said to have converted her brother from a dissolute life. There is a letter extant from a wealthy London merchant granting this abbess the loan of Tyndale's *Enchiridion*, so she must have been a woman of learning as well as of good position. In the face of slanderers such as Legh it is necessary to insist that the Poor Ladies were also great ladies, and that many of them had the proud persistence of St. Clare where their Order was concerned.

The next foundation was that of BRUSEYARD in Suffolk.

"Nunnery of Minoresses, or Poor Clares, in Suffolk, the Duke of Clarence the first Founder" (Leland, *Collect.*, I, p. 62).

"Bruseyard, Collegiate Church in the County of Suffolk.

" *William*, Bishop of *Norwich*, made Statutes and Ordinances for the well governing of this Church ; wherein he sets forth, that *Maud* of *Lancaster*, then a Nun of the Collegiate Church of Nuns at *Campesse*, in his Diocese, Countess of *Ulster*, had founded a chantry of 5 Chaplains in the Town of *Ashe*, near *Campesse*, appointing them to perform the divine Service in the Chapel of the *Annunciation* of the glorious Virgin, within the Priory of the Nuns at *Campesse*, and to reside in the Town of *Ashe*, without and near the Priory aforesaid. But in regard that the said Place was too far distant, and it was inconvenient for the Priests to go twice a Day in Winter and in foul Weather, especially if they were Ancient, to perform the Service of the Church ; besides the Nearness of many Women close by the Choir of Nuns, who distracted them by their Noise, therefore at the request of the said Priests, and with the Consent of the Nuns, he had remov'd the said Chantry to *Bruseyard*, in the Manor of *Rokhalle*, and appointed them the following Ordinances.

1. That they should have a decent Habitation at *Bruseyard*, with one dortor for them all to lye in and a Refectory to eat together, as also a chapel in Honor of the *Annunciation* of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the Divine Service. Therefore, pursuant to the will of the aforesaid *Maud*, he appointed there should be 5 perpetual Chaplains, one of them to be Warden, or Master, to whom, or his Deputy in his Absence, the rest should be obedient. The Wardens and others to be cloath'd, shav'd, etc., all alike. In the Choir to be like the Canons of *Sarum*. Three Masses to be daily said, one of *St. Mary*, another of the Day, and the third for the Dead. One of them to be appointed Treasurer, and he to furnish Bread, Wine, etc., for the Use of the Chapel. The Warden to have 60 Shillings, and each other Priest 40 Shillings for Cloaths and other Necessaries, besides diet. Upon a Vacancy, a Warden to be chosen by the Chaplains, to be confirm'd by the Bishop, after having appeared before the Prioress of

*Campeesse*, as Patroness of the said Chantry. That they should have a Common Seal under three several Keys, etc. These Ordinances are dated 1354" (Abergwylly).

*Nuns Minorcesses of Bruseyard in Suffolk.*

The following is Tanner's account of this house, founded upon the charters which follow, and upon the relation of its first establishment preserved in the Bruseyard Chartulary. He says—

"The College founded at Asshe by Maud, Countess of Ulster, was removed to the manor place of Rokehall in Bruseyard, where was also built a chapel of the Annunciation, and the proper offices for the Warden and Priests, A.D. 1354; but upon some complaints, and at the instance of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, with the consent of the King, this College or Chantry, with all the lands belonging thereunto was surrendered 4th Oct. 40th Ed. III to the use of an Abbess and sisters, Nuns Minorcesses of the Order of St. Clare, who remained here till the general suppression when their yearly revenues were estimated at £56 12s. *per annum*. The site and endowments of the Abbey were granted to Nicholas Hare, 30th Hen. VIII."

Cole, in his MSS., Vol. XXVII, mentions Margaret Calthorpe as abbess here in 1500. Tanner gives references to various public records concerning this house between the 20th of Edward III and the 9th Henry V; whence it appears that in Suffolk and Norfolk they possessed the manors of Rokehall in Bruseyard, Stanford, Harpham, Wilton, Benye, the churches of Burgh, Rendelsham, Sutton, Re . . . hall and St. Andrew of Bulmere, and lands, tenements and rents in Holbrook, Tatingston, Bruseyard, Swiftling, Saulton, Badlingham, Winston, Petaugh, Debenham, Harpham and Harlton.

In the list of monasteries and convents which obtained the royal grant to remain undissolved we find BRUSEYARD under date the 4th of July, 1537; and on the Treasurer's



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Roll we find the sum £20 as paid for this same patent to remain. The abbess had written that the convent was of good repute, and for the time being her small payment and her influence secured her the grant. But on the 17th of February, 1539, we find that the convent is surrendered, and that the revenue is estimated at £56 2s. 1d.

Nor was it only in England that the Poor Clares suffered at English hands; when Francis Drake ravaged Haiti in 1586 he turned the Poor Clares out of their monastery there—but Philip II of Spain re-installed them! It is just as well sometimes to see the other side of historical events as sketched in the Protestant histories of the ordinary English school!

These weeping nuns who, according to Dr. Legh, were so ready to escape from the cloister migrated to the Low Countries, and at Veere, Antwerp, St. Omer and elsewhere took up again their life of prayer. At St. Omer Philip II, King of Spain, gave them a house known as the "Archers House," which the fugitive nuns more than filled. It was here that the saintly Mary Ward entered as an extern sister, the monastery being so crowded with English choir nuns that the number of these could not be increased. A few months before, the niece of Lord Lumley had also been received as an extern sister. Whilst out "questing" Mary Ward heard of some land at GRAVELINES left by will for the founding of a monastery; she at once tried to get possession of it, and, having means of her own, was able to do so, and hand it over to the English Clares. Gravelines is on the coast, near Calais; and in September 1609 Mgr. Blaze, Bishop of St. Omer, was able to establish the enclosure at the new convent, which was called *Nazareth*.

The first abbess was Mother Mary Gough, or Goudge—in religion Sister Marie de St. Etienne—and amongst the first professions at Gravelines were Frances Wollaston, Agnes Knightley, Mary Parker and Mary Gifford. The same English Catholic names appear again and again in



the records of the Poor Clares ; for instance, we find fourteen Cliftons and seven Blundells on the rolls, and there are several Gerards, Howards, Arundells, Powers, Nugents, Talbots, Andertons, Tempests, Petries, Langdales, Shaftoes, Martyns, Jerninghams, and so on.

Mary Ward entered as a choir novice, but, strangely enough, found no vocation for the enclosed life ; she suffered great interior trials, and felt called to the founding of convents for English girls, but her confessors were against it. She was yet young, only twenty-two, and she resolved to return to England and wait awhile until her path became plain to her. We shall come across her again in the Anger convent at Munich.

Mother Mary Gough was a saintly and enthusiastic woman, but unfortunately she only lived to serve five years of office, and still more unfortunately, because of the great call for Catholic instruction for young English girls sent over to France, the Clares were obliged to undertake to teach and receive pupils. The second abbess, Susan Gage, was elected when only twenty-one years of age, and lived to fill the office only eighteen months ; the third abbess was Elizabeth Tildesley, who was twenty-nine years of age, and who ruled nearly forty years. England furnished so many vocations to Gravelines that in 1619 the abbess was able to make a foundation at AIRE, sending as abbess Margaret Radcliffe, and with her eighteen choir nuns, three lay-sisters and two novices.

In all the histories of this time when there is mention of the wars in the Low Countries—such as Burnet's *History of his Own Time*—there is mention of terrible battles at these towns, and in an old war-map of General John Hill's of Dunkirk (now in our possession) the convent of Poor Clares is marked as one of the important buildings of the town.

In 1625 a second foundation was made at DUNKIRK, Anne Brown, a niece of Lord Montague's, being sent as abbess, and with her eight or ten religious and some Friars

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Minor. From here a foundation was made at NEWPORT in 1627, but after two short years the Newport Clares removed to Ireland.

At Gravelines there were fires and explosions and alarms, and in 1644 the siege of the town for forty-three days, during which the religious gave themselves up entirely to prayer. On the victory of the French, Gaston, Duc d'Orleans, attended the convent chapel for the singing of the *Te Deum*, the parish church having suffered severely from the bombardment. In this same year the third foundation from Gravelines was designed for Rouen, though, owing to wars and alarms, it was not completed for some years. Pope Innocent X gave to the Abbess of Gravelines after this third foundation the title of "Mother Superior of all the English and Irish Convents of Poor Clares." It was little more than a title, as the abbess did not travel; she was trying, poor abbess! to combine the active and the contemplative life, and keep a school and keep the rule of St. Clare at the same time. The French nuns are very scathing about Gravelines; they write: "*Les Clarisses Anglaises furent surtout préoccupées de deux choses, de leur œuvre du Pensionnat et des possessions à acquérir ou à conserver, des dots à exiger, etc. . . . Dès lors, la plupart de ces âmes religieuses n'habitèrent pas assez dans le ciel, et beaucoup trop sur la terre, dont elles désiraient les biens. On voit, en effet, presque toutes les Abbesses de Gravelines se préoccuper beaucoup du temporel.*"

Be that as it may, the life was hard; the bread was black and the beer was thin, and even their habits and veils were changed about so that they might have nothing of their own. In 1652 Gravelines was again besieged—this time for sixty-nine days. Amongst these calamities Madame Tildesley remained calm and gracious, giving thanks to God that she had been permitted to receive ninety-two novices during her reign. She died peacefully on the 17th of February, 1654.

The next abbess was Louisa Taylor, in religion Sister Louise Claire; she was forty-four years old at the time of her election, and had previously been novice-mistress. Shortly after her election, on the 10th of May, there was a terrible explosion at a powder magazine in the town, and the convent suffered severely, though none of the religious were killed. The following naïve account by a Poor Clare is interesting: "The air became suddenly dark, the atmosphere suffocating; for a moment a violent noise was heard, as if a million caunons had been let off together. Then we heard lamentable outcries, and saw persons flying up into the air, exclaiming, 'Jesus! Mary!' Many persons were carried over the ramparts and fortifications, and found dead in the fields." There were sixty nuns in the convent at the time, and their names are given; we find amongst them Blundells, Vaughans, Howards, Petres, Talbots and Vavasours—all names which can be found also amongst the Poor Clares of the subsequent centuries.

From the 3rd of July to the 30th of August, 1658, Gravelines was again under siege, and all teaching was suspended, and nuns and scholars alike gave themselves to prayer. The poor also crowded to the convent for bread, for they were starving. The abbess worked calmly on; she was revising the rule according to the constitutions of St. Colette, but she had to leave in the Urbanist permission to teach.

In 1667 Louisa Taylor died, and was succeeded by Ann Bedingfield—in religion Mother Anne Beneventura—who had been twenty-seven years in the convent. It fell to her, soon after her election, to receive into the Order Lady Warner and her sister-in-law Elizabeth, under rather unusual circumstances. Lady Warner, *née* Trevor, was brought up a Protestant, made a rich marriage, but could find no satisfaction or content in a worldly life; one day she shut herself up in her boudoir and announced that from henceforth she would see no one but her husband and



her sister-in-law. These relations agreed to live in isolation with her, and they all three set to work to study theology. In a short time they were received into the Catholic Church, and soon after left Great Britain, and the two ladies presented themselves at Gravelines and pleaded for admission. Lord John was with them, and announced his intention of joining the Jesuits; there were no children. Similar cases had been frequent in the lifetime of St. Francis, but were rare in the seventeenth century; however, it is recorded that all three of the Warners were true to their vocation and left behind them saintly memories.

Vocations from England were becoming fewer and fewer, and the palmy days of Gravelines were passed; during the eighteenth century the convent records are largely taken up by financial troubles.

In 1736 Helen Petre was elected abbess under the title of Sister Mary Felix; in 1779 she celebrated her jubilee in religion, and in 1783 she died at the age of eighty, "amidst the sighs and tears of her afflicted children."

She was succeeded by Mother Johnson, but Revolution was at the doors! As an educational establishment of foreigners the Clarisses of Gravelines were given a permit to remain; but on the 29th of January, 1794, their sacristy was depleted of all its most valuable treasures. The Clarisses were discouraged, scholars were few, times were troublous.

In 1795 we find the municipality of Gravelines issuing passports to "fourteen Clarisses of this town and one pupil, and thirty-eight Clarisses of Dunkirk, who desire to return to their own country." In accepting these passports the Clarisses signed a declaration thanking France for having given them shelter in time of trouble, and saying that, as all their income came from England, and had ceased with the interruption of correspondence between the two countries, they felt bound during the time the war lasted to return to their own country, with



the firm intention of returning "to enjoy the advantages of the wise laws of the French Republic." The abbess at this time was a daughter of Lord George Elphinstone-Keith, and under her guidance the nuns retired to Gosfield in Essex, where the Duchess of Buckingham gave them hospitality.

After twenty years' sojourn in England, on the 2nd of December, 1814, under the newly elected abbess, Mary Martin, six of the Gravelines nuns and two of the Dunkirk nuns set sail again for France. They were settled in and ready for pupils in 1817; in response to a prospectus a few arrived—also some novices. But there was a lack of fervour—the old fire was not rekindled. The thirteenth and last abbess, Margaret Cullen, was elected in 1829; she had but three helpers—Sisters Latham, Page and Thomson—and some half-dozen pupils.

Reinforcements came from Plymouth and Scorton Hall, but their stay was short; the pupils dwindled away; the abbess was dying of cancer. Then the Ursulines of Boulogne—those Ursulines who had given hospitality to Mother Mary Taylor and her flock on her way to Rouen, and who were described by the mother as "grave and comely in their dress, and gracious in their demeanour"—took over the charge of the convent and the care of the dying abbess and her sole companion, Sister Jane Latham. Sadly enough we conclude this chapter in all humility by quoting, without endorsing, the words of the Clares of Lyons—

"C'en était fait ! Cette institution, qui prit le nom de Sainte-Claire, sans son esprit de pauvreté, n'existait plus."

We know well that the spirit of poverty *was* there : the difficulty was that it was not supreme. The poor nuns were ever torn between the two duties of prayer and teaching—between the ideal of St. Clare and the cry of their country for Catholic teaching for its daughters. They did a great work—Gravelines has left its mark.

We must turn back to the foundation at Rouen, which

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was made from Gravelines in 1644 by Sister Mary Francis Taylor and fifteen nuns; the English Queen Henrietta was at Paris, and obtained from Louis XIV the necessary letters patent for them. In the book published by the Kenmare Clares, there are fragments of an interesting letter from Madame Taylor describing their numerous adventures by wagon between Gravelines and Rouen. "You will easily conceive what sorrowful dispositions we were in, our hearts oppressed, tears in our eyes and wearied with sickness and travelling. . . . The Ursulines received us at Boulogne, and saluted us all. We were taken to the refectory, where a good supper was prepared, and one of the religious read aloud the life of St. Catherine. After grace we were taken into a room for a little spiritual recreation, and in about half-an-hour they led us into the dormitory, where each of us had a cell. The good mother was pleased to give me hers. There was a bed, a little cupboard and a picture. All was so neat and clean I got my first rest." When they got near Rouen, their chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Gray, who had gone on ahead to make provision for them, let them know he had found them no place to go to. "You may conceive what reason we had to think of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. As our wagoners went on, they asked us where they were to stop. God knows, we exclaimed, we know not; however, we bid them drive on until they would see an inn, and then we told them to set us down." For some time they had to dwell in a broken-down house, and it was not till October 1652 their new monastery—"The Exile of Jesus, Mary, Joseph"—was completed. Amongst their first postulants was the Hon. Miss Arundel; and Sister Ignatia Bedingfield, daughter of an English baronet, was their second abbess. The three Lady Westons, daughters of the Earl of Portland, and a daughter of Sir Henry Browne, were also professed at Rouen; but the keenest interest is roused by Sister Mary of the Holy Cross, an English lady who had been educated by the Protestant Countess of Berkshire. She was professed on the 8th of

September, 1675, and her true name was never disclosed : it probably hides one of the romances of history. Mother Winifred Giffard, abbess, died at Rouen in 1706 at ninety years of age.

The "Exile of Jesus, Mary, Joseph" felt the first shock of the French Revolution in 1791, when the public door to their church was boarded out. Two years later the convent itself was attacked. The story of an eye-witness is given of this event, also by the Kenmare Clares. On the 2nd of October at seven in the morning the chaplain was preparing for Mass, and nuns were all at prayer in the choir, when forty armed men entered, seized the priest and wounded him cruelly, and shut the nuns up in the refectory for four hours. They then took an inventory of everything in the house, told the nuns they were prisoners and must put on secular clothing. Several women and children were also shut into the convent and guards put at the doors. The nuns cut up the curtains to make themselves gowns, and ministered to their fellow-prisoners. Their greatest distress was the thought of the Blessed Sacrament in its Tabernacle, which they could not get at. They managed to ask some imprisoned priests for advice, and at their suggestion one of the nuns, half dead with fright, got through the grating into the church during the night and rescued the Blessed Sacrament.

They were removed to another prison, and the food supplied was poor and scanty, and the overcrowding was terrible. They mention a Mrs. Goldie and her two children, and a Mrs. Davis as compatriots who were fellow-prisoners. At length in January 1795 they were set free, but told to leave the country. In little bands, through immense hardships, they made their way to Havre, and thence to England, where friends awaited them. They were offered a temporary home at Haggerstone Castle in Yorkshire, and after ten years there they purchased Scorton Hall, near Calterich, in Yorkshire, where they stayed fifty years. In 1857 Mother Elizabeth Leadbitter and thirty nuns moved to their present beauti-



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ful abode, St. Clare's Abbey, about a mile outside DARLINGTON. The church, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception and St. Clare, is in Gothic style, and the east window has figures of St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Joseph, St. Colette, St. Bonaventura and St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Whilst they were at Rouen Mr. Petre of Margate had given the nuns a donation of £1,500, and asked them to pray for the conversion of England. They then commenced to say the Litany of the Saints for this intention after the midnight service, and through all their changes, even during their imprisonment, they have not failed for 150 years to offer this prayer, and they have seen with joy the frequent conversions in England, and the growing toleration and understanding of the Catholic position by Protestants. In 1868 Mother Elizabeth Leadbetter died, and was succeeded by Mother Mary Agnes Newsham, only child of John Newsham, and niece of Mgr. Charles Newsham, D.D., the former President of Ushaw College. It is interesting to note that her grandmother, Ann Wilson, was a convert from Quakerism, and that the Society of Friends, which flourishes so exceedingly in Yorkshire, has given many conversions to Rome. She ruled the abbey for twenty years, and died on the 16th of October, 1889.

The Rev. Mother Mary Dominic Berlamonte, abbess at Bruges from 1831 till her death in 1871, founded not only nine convents in Belgium and one in France, but also four in England—Baddesley, London, Manchester and York.

Of these, the first was Our Lady of the Angels at BADDESLEY-CLINTON in Warwickshire. A pious girl, who had been in the service of the Actons, became an extern sister at Bruges; she heard that of old the Acton family had succoured the Poor Clares during the suppression in Henry VIII's reign; and she mentioned this to her late mistress. Mr. Acton, of Wolverton Hall, became filled with a desire to assist the return of the Clares to England, and at the same time Bishop Ullathorne of Birming-



ham expressed a wish that Clares could come to the old Franciscan convent at Baddesley, which the friars had deserted twenty years previously. The Bishop of Birmingham wrote to the Bishop of Bruges, and Bishop Malon went with confidence to Mother Mary Dominic. She accepted the responsibility, and on the 22nd of August, 1850, she herself with six choir sisters and three externs set out for England. Mgr. Ullathorne welcomed the party, and with all due ceremony installed the enclosure and gave Benediction. It needed some of St. Clare's courage for this community to come to a foreign country, to come among Protestants, and to be dependent on their neighbours for their daily bread. Their confidence was justified, and the convent flourished; in ten years their numbers had increased to twenty choir and five extern sisters. After Mother Mary Dominic returned to Belgium, the first abbess wrote: "We are dependent entirely on alms for our daily support, and by the visible blessing of God the charity of the faithful has never failed us. On the contrary, all our wants have been supplied, though it was deemed by many impossible that we should be sufficiently provided for, as our convent is distant from a town and in a Protestant country. Thanks be to the Divine Providence, all these difficulties have been overcome."

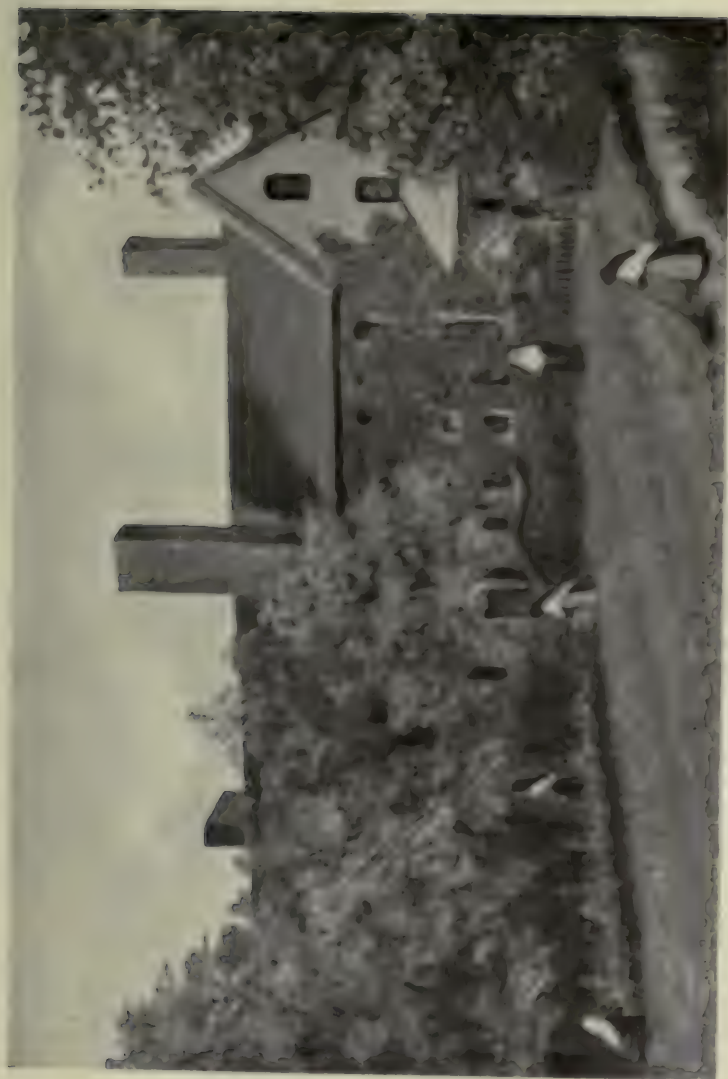
There are some very touching stories of the early trials of these Poor Clares in the "*Vie de la Mère Marie-Dominique*." The extern sisters taught the poor children of the neighbourhood, and through the children the people got to know about the nuns, and many were the conversions in consequence. Mr. William Acton had acted as first syndic for the nuns, and after his death Mr. Marmion Ferrers took over the work; until he in his turn was succeeded by Mr. Edward Dering. The first abbess was Mother Mary Victoria (de Seilleo), who died in the odour of sanctity in 1865; she was followed by Mother Mary Bernardine (Clifford) from 1865 to 1871, and then Mother Mary Francis (Grix) was elected. It was to Mother Mary

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Francis that the first translation of the rule and constitutions into English was due. In 1895 Mother Aloysius (Jones) was elected abbess, and continued in office till her death in 1901, when she was succeeded by Mother Mary Rose Woolleth, the present abbess. The community now consists of twenty-five choir sisters and nine lay sisters : these latter tend the mission school, which is under Government, and numbers over one hundred children.

In the summer of 1857 Dr. Manning visited Assisi and prayed at the shrine of St. Clare. The inspiration came to him to establish these sisters of penance and prayer in restless sinful London. He went back by Bruges and made a request for Poor Clares at the Mother House ; it was at once complied with, and on the 29th of September, 1857, Mother Mary Dominic set out once more, taking seven nuns with her, to form a convent in LONDON. At first they were lodged in a little Bayswater house ; Cardinal Wiseman came to welcome and bless them, and they found in their humble lodging all they desired. The first abbess was Mother Marie-Seraphim (Van Biervliet).

Dr. Manning had bought a piece of ground at Notting Hill for them, and there he proceeded to build a convent, over which work he kept the closest surveillance. When it was finished he threw it open for inspection for several days, and hundreds of people, both Protestants and Catholics, went to visit it. There was a square cloister garth, another small garden with a calvary, and cells for twenty-four choir and several extern sisters. Everything was humble, and yet there was all that a Poor Clare could desire. The nuns were formally enclosed there on the 13th of June, 1860. The neighbourhood took some time to get used to them. Mr. Palmer Thomas tells us how he, when a small boy, threw stones at the door and ran away—for he believed that all sorts of iniquities went on behind those closed doors ! A fervent convert and decorated with the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, he now says with glee : "But those Clares have caught me,



ENCLOSURE, NOTTING HILL CONVENT





though I did run away, and though they never leave their enclosure!" Also the nearest neighbour was a Protestant, and one day he called to say his wife was ill and annoyed by the continual chanting. The Rev. Mother promised that the nuns should during his wife's illness chant as softly as possible. In a few days he returned to say his wife was better, and missed the sound of the nuns' voices! Soon she had her bed put against the dividing wall that she might hear better. When she was well she brought the nuns flowers and gifts, and in the end the good God granted her faith.

Mgr. Turner of MANCHESTER was the next to approach Mother Mary Dominic with a desire for the daughters of penance and prayer to come and settle in his striving, restless diocese. He knew how many there were in Manchester who never prayed; he knew how the atmosphere of prayer seems to disperse all round a convent and hallow the work of those without. It is recorded that many Protestants brought alms to the bishop, and Canon Benoit his secretary, to help them to establish these holy women in their midst; and that after the installation there were many conversions.

At first the Clares occupied an old house of the Récollet Fathers, but in 1867 they were able to buy a piece of ground at Levenshulme and build a convent in accordance with their rule. They took possession on the 2nd of March, 1868. The first abbess of this foundation was Mother Mary Dominic Tielen, and it seems worth while to state briefly that the people of Manchester came in crowds to welcome the nuns and cheered them loudly, that for thirteen days the nuns received visitors and showed them the house and explained the rule, and then, to take up the story in their own words: "At last the longed-for day of enclosure arrived. At nine o'clock there was High Mass and a beautiful sermon, during which Father Emmanuel said to those present that he was going to confirm the religious in their vows and enclose them in their holy retreat, and that those who desired might

go with him to the convent. All, therefore, formed in procession and followed Father Emmanuel in a last tour of the convent; at each room he explained the duties that the religious would there fulfil. His assistants were moved to tears. Having arrived at the closure door, the emotion became general, all recommended themselves to the prayers of the nuns and kissed their hands. Lastly the extern sisters embraced the choir sisters. The Rev. Father made a last exhortation, and in the name of the Bishop of Manchester handed the keys of the door to the abbess, who turned them with joy, and then she and her daughters went to their choir and chanted the *Te Deum*."

Happy prisoners, self-incarcerated, in order to be alone with God!

Lady Herries, wife of the eleventh Baron Herries and herself a Vavasour, sent the cry from YORK to Bruges, and six choir sisters and two externs set out on the 4th of August, 1865, arriving the next day. They were received with warmth by the Catholics, and with curiosity by the Protestants. For three days the house was left open to visitors, and then Mgr. de Beverley installed the enclosure. Their prayers brought many conversions in this ancient home of Catholicism.

In 1872 the community had so increased they had to move into their present Convent of St. Joseph in Lawrence Street. There is extant a letter from the saintly Mother Mary Dominic to her daughters at this, her last English foundation: "You who are called to the imitation of Christ in poverty and humility, refuse no demand of that God who is so generous to you; and you who are called to be missionaries in York, give your whole heart to fulfilling that mission by your saintly lives, your good example, and above all by your spirit of prayer. You know, dear children, that in our time there is little or no esteem for the contemplative Orders; people say they are good for nothing, and praise only the active Orders; but for my part I say that though the active Orders are







ENTRANCE, BULLINGHAM CONVENT.

necessary, the contemplatives must assist the active. Oh, dear children, pray! never was there a time when there was a greater necessity for prayer!"

The first abbess was Sister Mary Philomena De Smet.

The convent at Notting Hill flourished so exceedingly that on the 4th of November, 1880, they were able to send seven choir sisters and two externs to Lower BULLINGHAM, a hamlet two miles out of Hereford. The request came from Mr. and Mrs. Bodenham of Rotherwas, who lent the Manor House at Bullingham for six years to begin the foundation; and subsequently gave the ground on which to build the convent. The foundation was made in the greatest poverty, and at first the sisters had to put up with many trials.

Mgr. Ricard tells a pretty story of how one winter these nuns in their lonely convent were snowed up and left without bread. The weather was so bad the extern sisters could not get out to seek food, so, as in the days of old, the nuns set themselves to prayer. With extended arms—"les bras en croix"—as they always pray to St. Francis on the 2nd of October, they prayed to him now, and they prayed to God. And suddenly they heard shouts without, and it was a man with a long pole, who with great difficulty had come to them with some bread, having bethought him that they might be foodless. The nuns gave thanks to God, blessed the man, and ate the bread.

The present convent had to be built bit by bit, as the sisters could afford it. The choir, outside chapel and part of the main block were built from a legacy inherited by one of the nuns. Later on £1,000 was left them by a Franciscan tertiary—a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, which includes men and women living in the world. Only a few years ago a novice was received, who in giving up her worldly goods made arrangements for the chaplain's stipend, so that now the foundation is complete. We are able to give some illustrations of this convent, thanks to the courtesy of the Abbess and Sisters.



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The present abbess, Mother Mary Angela Parker, who lately kept her golden jubilee, was also the first abbess. There are now nineteen choir sisters (including novices) and five extern sisters. The nuns have to labour for their support, and this they do by making altar breads and doing church work.

The next demand for a foundation came to the mother abbess at Notting Hill from Flora, Duchess of Norfolk, who had had many relations in the Order in the days of old. On the 7th of September, 1886, then, eight choir sisters and two externs were sent to Cross Bush, ARUNDEL, where the young Duchess had built them a convent entirely by her own means, even selling some of her jewels to help forward the work. To the great grief of many the Duchess died in April 1887; the Duke took up the good work, and enlarged and supported the convent, and has ever cared for the sisters and all their needs.

Abbess Gasquet, the first head, died in 1902, and was succeeded by the present Mother Abbess Campbell. There are now fifteen sisters in the enclosure.

Only last year, on the 7th of September, 1911, the Duke of Norfolk attended the celebration of the silver jubilee of this convent, and gave a lunch to the many noted Catholics who assembled to congratulate the community and attend the jubilee High Mass.

In the year 1902 Miss Imrie, a lady of LIVERPOOL, not less distinguished by her piety and virtue than for her wealth, approached the late Abbess Philomena of York with a view to establishing a contemplative Order in the busy shipping centre, where her money had been made. The bishop of the diocese approved, and Miss Imrie at once secured the lease of a house at Woolton, and there for seven years the Clares carried out their life of prayer and penance. It was a life of poverty also, but the Franciscan tertiaries in the different parishes gave cordial and willing help, and several times brought gifts of provisions just when the need was greatest, without having

been solicited for help. Even the barefooted little children have been known to run after an extern sister and offer her a ha'penny.

The Clares have much admired the beautiful spirit of charity they have found in Liverpool, which reflects much credit on the Catholic teaching given. In 1906 Miss Imrie entered the Poor Clare convent at Bullingham; it was a great grief to the sisters at Liverpool, yet they could not but admire the courage and wisdom which made her seek a cloister not of her own founding, and where personalities and interests could less distract her.

Before she entered she had made all arrangements for the present convent at Green Lane, Wavertree—a suburb of Liverpool—but the building is not yet complete as regards the enclosure—the infirmary and noviciate have yet to be added. Though plain in appearance and poor in furniture, according to the rule, the convent is a solid building and presents a bright aspect. It is served by the Redemptorist Fathers, who live close by.

Perhaps the greatest blow to the Liverpool community was that Miss Imrie, who made up her mind to enter Bullingham whilst at Rome, felt called not to return to take leave of the nuns who had come to hold her in such affection and esteem. She left them to the care of her aunt, Miss Blackley, who is still their mother syndic, and who has helped her niece conscientiously in the dispensation of her enormous fortune. The new Franciscan church in Fox Street, Liverpool, is also due to Miss Imrie's munificence.

There are at present twelve choir sisters, one novice and one postulant, and six extern sisters at Liverpool. The little community has been much blessed, and would perhaps have been too prosperous without its one cross of losing Miss Imrie, now professed as Sister Clare.

The rule is that of the Poor Clare-Colettines.

In 1885 the convent of Poor Clares at Rennes was founded from the celebrated monastery of L'Ave-Maria.

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In 1904 these Poor Clares of the First Rule were exiled from France and found a temporary refuge with the Franciscan nuns at Woodchester. A convent priest heard of their homeless position and offered to build them a convent at LYNTON in Devon. The Bishop of Plymouth agreed and offered his aid; the founder spent £10,000 on land and buildings, and on the 19th of March, 1910, the nuns moved into the present beautiful convent.

The building is on the side of a hill, and is so arranged that the first floor extends only along the south front, and gives cells and work-rooms for five extern sisters, and a parlour with grille. Upstairs, with a level entrance to the convent garden and cloister, are fifteen cells for the choir nuns, a noviciate, and infirmary, and all the usual offices. The church is dedicated to the Most Holy Saviour, and is the church of the mission. It is most beautifully furnished with treasures from Italy.

Away back in the fifteenth century, the Blessed Francoise d'Amboise, Duchess of Brittany, brought six Poor Clare-Colettines to Nantes, and installed them in an old family mansion in the town. The first abbess was Guillemette Joguète. At the time of the French Revolution the nuns had to fly for their lives, and suffered grievous perils. Their convent was entirely destroyed. In 1857 the Count and Countess of Pemodan invited some of the Clares of Marseilles to come to Nantes and make a foundation there. This was accomplished in 1859, with Mother Mary de St. Clare as abbess, who reigned in peace till her death in 1899. Mother St. Louis de Gonzaga was elected in her place, and soon had to face the difficulties of the modern suppression. She had amongst her nuns an English lady, Sister Mary of the Incarnation, who had entered the convent at Nantes in 1868, and with her aid it was decided to form an English foundation to be a refuge from the coming storm. In August 1904 the Rev. Mother and eleven sisters landed on these shores and proceeded to Bagshot. No one who has not had



personal knowledge of the difficulties of the poor religious when exiled, can understand the trials these and other nuns are now going through. And only those who have lived in the cloister can understand the difficulties of governing different nationalities, and how severely a nun can suffer from nostalgia. In the autumn of 1911 this little community found a permanent home and a welcome at LUTTERWORTH in Leicestershire—the very haunt of Wycliffe! At the same time the last of their sisters were expelled from Nantes and fled to Grugliasco, near Turin. For the sake of following that religious life that is the Poor Clare's richest treasure, they have given up their home and country; and the prayers of all Catholics, the sympathy of all Protestants is asked on their behalf.

#### SCOTLAND.

Scotland has, at present, only one convent of Poor Clares, that at Liberton near Edinburgh. The foundation took place on the 23rd of July, 1895, from Baddesley-Clinton; the Rev. Mother Bernardine (Clifford) being the first abbess, and having with her at first only one sister. Archbishop Macdonald welcomed the Clares and helped them to select a suitable site. In the following September two choir sisters, one extern sister, and a postulant joined them, and for two years this little band lived in a small house and strictly kept the rule of the Clare-Colettines. In one particular for the first three months they had to relax the rule—they had to go to a neighbouring convent for Mass, as the archbishop could not provide them with a priest; but they rose every night to chant Matins and fasted continuously. After the first few months a Belgian priest was found to come and minister to them, and he remained their chaplain for seven years.

They entered their new convent (two wings only of

which are built) on the 26th of May, 1897. When finished the building is to be quadrangular in form, three sides providing cells and offices for thirty nuns, whilst the fourth side will be formed by the church. The style is Gothic, and the material the white stone of Dumbarton: it will be a beautiful building when Scotland has aroused herself to complete it, and to appreciate this temple of prayer in their midst. On the 18th of March, 1910, Mother Bernardine Clifford died in the seventy-ninth year of her age, and the fifty-fourth year in religion. Another nun who came from Baddesley died at Edinburgh aged seventy-seven, having been in religion sixty years. The present abbess is Mother Gabriel, and there are eight professed sisters and two postulants in the enclosure; and four extern sisters in the entrance block.

It is always worth while to remind the Presbyterian Scot, that William Wallace and Robert the Bruce were both of the Catholic faith; they are so apt to let their studies into the religious history of their country begin and end with Knox.

#### IRELAND.

According to Wadding there were five convents of Poor Clares in Ireland in 1541, but there are no annals of them remaining.

In the year 1625 six religious left Gravelines to restore the Order in Ireland—their native country. They were Sisters Mary Joseph and Cicely Francis, daughters of Viscount Dillon; Sister Mary Power and Sister Mary Eustace, belonging to well-known Dublin families; Sister Mary Magdalene Nugent of Meath, and lastly Sister Martha Marianna, whose secular name and habitation were kept secret, and who is another convent mystery.

They were at first resident in Ship Street, Dublin, but were brought before the Lord-Deputy and commanded to

leave the city. It is said that the quiet dignity of the abbess so impressed the Lord-Deputy, Viscount Falkland, that seeing the religious were barefoot, he insisted on sending them back in his carriage. Sir Luke Dillon, brother of the abbess, gave the nuns temporary shelter until he had built them a convent in a lonely spot six miles from Athlone—to which they gave the name of Bethlehem. Six novices had already joined them in Dublin, and others now came in, so that in a few years their number had increased to sixty. In spite of the secluded and boggy district of their retreat, they had many distinguished visitors, including the Duchess of Buckingham, and Lady Wentworth, widow of the unfortunate Strafford.

Their annalist says: "They were meanly apparelled, fed with the coarsest food and employed in the most servile offices (from which none would plead exemption), such as drawing turf and wood, brewing, baking, and serving in the kitchen. They prayed continually; their silence was such that midday seemed midnight; they observed all things as ordained by the First Rule of St. Clare, with the strict statutes of the Blessed Colette."

In 1641, for fear of wars and alarms, the abbess (a daughter of Sir Edmund Tuile) gave orders for perpetual adoration. But the danger came nearer, and at the last the nuns had to fly so suddenly that they left all behind them. The soldiers utterly destroyed the convent by fire. The community had to separate and seek shelter in private families. Mother Martha Marianna, who had been vicaress at Bethlehem, took several sisters to her native town of Wexford, where together they kept the rule till after two years the saintly Mother Martha died. Some also formed a community at Galway. Other of the Athlone nuns fled to SPAIN, where practically the only record left is, in many cases, that of their death. One of these exiles, Sister Catherine Bernard Browne, died in the odour of sanctity, and miracles took place at her tomb in Madrid. She also sent over a chronicle to the Clares



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who had sheltered in Galway, in the course of which she says : "There remain many of these dispersed nuns still alive (as well in the aforesaid convents as in other places) who are held in good estimation, of whom I will say nothing, as before death none is to be praised. I inhabited many years in the convent of Bethlehem, and after the destroying thereof in the convent of Galway. I did also verify that during my banishment here in Spain, I had seen several convents, in some of which I lodged several nights, and heard true relations of many, and withal had dwelt many years in one of the most renowned ; but in none is greater austerity than in the Irish convents."

Sister Julian Anthony Blake, another of the Irish nuns, died in the Royal Convent at Orduna, Spain, and of her it is told that though she knew but little of the Spanish language, she could always speak it fluently when she wanted to confess. She begged her sisters to bring their Irish harp and sing the *Te Deum* for her when she lay a-dying, so glad was she to leave this troublous world. Then calling out : "I believe ! I believe ! *Deo Gratia !*" she passed peacefully away.

Those of the Bethlehem nuns who fled to GALWAY have a special interest for us, for there is a link between them and the present. Also notes from their annals have been published in the little pamphlet : *The Poor Clares in Ireland*, issued by the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland. The first official information with regard to this community is an entry in the Corporation Book of Galway under date 1649—

"That your petitioners members of this Corporation, did some years sithence forsake the world for to serve the Almighty, and what through the distempers of the times, and through God's Holy Will, have suffered great affliction these seven years past, and in their necessity as bound by nature, repaired to this towne ; shewing further that, through necessity, by reason of the times their parents and friends are unable to furnish their wants as

in peaceable times they were intended ; and that your poor petitioners doe suffer muche by the exorbitant rent they pay, and, notwithstanding their due payment, are to be thrust out of their dwelling next May, their lease being then ended ; the premises considered, and taken to your consideration the inconvenience of religious women who want habitation, the convenience of their residence in this place, the preferment of young children though poor shall be relieved, by God's assistance, in our convent, the everlasting prayers to be made for you, the glory of God, the preservation of the town by your petitioners, and their successors, their intercessions, the honour of Gallway, to befounde such a monasterie ; the petitioners humbly pray that you may be pleased to grant them sufficient roome for building a monasterie and rooms convenient thereunto, a garden and orchard in the next island adjoyning to the bridge of Illan Altenagh ; and for that your petitioners is building will be rather a strength than any annoyance, hindrance or impeachment, either to the highway leading to the other island, or to the safety and preservation of this Corporation ; which granted they will ever pray, &c.

"SISTER MARY BONAVENTURA,  
*"Unworthie Abbess."*

This petition was granted and a handsome convent erected, but in 1652, after only two or three years' residence, Galway surrendered to the enemy and the nuns were dispersed ; as we have already seen, many fled to Spain. A few nuns after several years returned one by one to Galway and lived secretly in a house in Market Street, till in 1712 an order was issued to the Mayor to "suppress the convents in Galway," and the nuns once more fled. In the meanwhile their island on which they had built their convent and to which they had made a road, had been granted by Charles II to Lady Hamilton and Colonel Fitzpatrick. Sister Elizabeth Sherrett went to London at some unknown date "about this affair," and

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the result was that Lady Hamilton probably gave the Clares back the island. Certainly in 1736 Lady Hamilton, who held a place at Court, secured for the Poor Clares three acres of ground on their island, which had been vested in the Crown. Not until 1825, however, did they manage to get a new convent and chapel built and return there to community life of a sort.

But quite lately, under their last abbess, Mother Joseph Hyland, they got back their grilles again and returned to the strict observance of the contemplative life. It was a time of great rejoicing; so many of the Poor Clares in Ireland are active—have schools and so on, and are, therefore, unable to observe the First Rule in its purity. Even on Nuns' Island, Galway, the nuns are not allowed to live on alms, and therefore have to have possessions. The most perfect poverty is not theirs yet. But it is a beautiful thought that there on ground hallowed by so long association with the name of St. Clare, the sisters now practise all the other austerities of her rule—wear the coarse brown habit, go barefoot, rise at midnight for the office and fast continually. There the daily routine and the self-same prayers link them with the other Clares all over the world. Ireland is coming into her own again.

There are at present about eighteen choir and four extern sisters at Galway; the abbess is Mother Teresa Tierney. The Franciscan Friars serve the convent, and there is daily adoration.

From Athlone a foundation was made at Drogheda in 1633, but after only a few years of splendid prosperity persecution set in. In 1641 the nuns were warned of approaching danger, and they put a picture in the choir of St. Clare repelling the Saracens, and set themselves to prayer. When the attacking army finally came, the nuns just had time to escape across the lake in a boat. The town was destroyed and the people massacred. The sisters were dispersed, and for many years of fiery trial were ever flying from one place to another. But when



the heats of rebellion gave place to the chill hopelessness of Cromwell's iron grip, the poor nuns had to fly the country and take refuge in Spain. The annals of their troubles as told in the book issued by the Kenmare nuns in 1864, is rather incorrect as regards dates and places.

In the year 1712, when the Battle of the Boyne was sinking into the past and there was a comparative calm in Ireland, some of the dispersed Clares secretly returned to Dublin and tried to form a community in Channel Row. "On the morning of the 7th of September, 1712, just as Mass had concluded, some officers entered the house and surprised several nuns in their habits. The abbess was not apprehended, as she wore secular garb, but three of the sisters in their religious dress were taken before the court, and only released when a Mr. Lynch, a relative of the abbess, went bail for them. The house was searched and all their books and papers taken."

A similar incident occurred on the 14th of June, 1718, the magistrates doing no more than question and threaten, being apparently anxious to deal leniently with the nuns. For over twenty years the nuns had to live in secular dress, observing only so much of the rule as was compatible with the government of the English.

In the year 1743, however, the Rev. Father Murphy, a noted Jesuit, gave a retreat to the nuns and tried to stir them up to stricter observance; eight choir sisters, a novice and a postulant answered to his call, and by arrangement with Archbishop Lanigan moved into a house in Russell's Court and resumed a stricter observance of the rule. They struggled on for fifty years, feeling the poverty and disturbed state of the country even in their cloister, and in 1804 were obliged to relax the rule, at the request of Archbishop Troy, to undertake the charge of an orphanage. Pope Pius VII granted the necessary rescripts, and a brief requiring the sisters to make a fourth vow of devotion to the education of poor female children. A new convent was built in 1804 for the nuns



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at Harold's Cross, Dublin, and in 1817, owing to quieter times and tempers of the populace, the nuns at last resumed the habit. These Clares still have the care of some sixty or seventy orphan girls, and so have to follow a modified rule. The abbess is Mrs. O'Loughlin and the nuns number eleven.

A foundation at NEWRY, in the North of Ireland, was successfully commenced in 1830; but the nuns were well on the boundary line, and in a political riot in 1833 had all their windows broken. Still they persevered and prospered, and followed the Urbanist rule strictly; at the present time the community numbers about twenty-four.

From Newry there were two foundations; one at Cavan and the other at Kenmare near Killarney.

At ARMAGH there is a teaching community of Poor Clares with a school for 230 pupils. It was founded in 1871, and has been very prosperous, the number of sisters now being twenty-three.

The convent of the Holy Cross, KENMARE, was built by Archdeacon O'Sullivan and founded by Mother Mary Michael O'Hagan and six sisters from Newry in 1861. The convent is a beautiful building in a lovely setting, and is used as a school; the nuns also make lace of noted beauty. Mrs. Catherine Dugdale is the present abbess, and there are about twenty sisters. It is very difficult to "place" these active Orders in Ireland that go by the name of Poor Clares: it makes it difficult for the outsider to understand the differences between the different rules: one naturally expects to find the same rule under the same name.

St. Joseph's Abbey, CAVAN, was the second foundation from Newry, and also follows the Urbanist rule. The community numbers about twenty-seven, and the abbess is Mrs. Mary Patrick Donelly.

At BALLYJAMESDUFF there is an Urbanist community with school for two hundred children attached and classes for lace-making. The sisters number fifteen.





CARLOW-CRAIGUE ABBEY, IRELAND.

The first Poor Clares of the Colettine rule were introduced into Ireland at CARLOW from Manchester in the year 1892. Mother Mary Seraphim Bowe and six sisters went over and were installed in a small house, and suffered great privations for many years until about eleven years since, when they moved into their present convent and enclosure was formally established. The building is strictly in conformity with the rule of poverty, but the chapel is a pretty little building which was solemnly blessed by Dr. Foley, Bishop of Kildare, in 1902, and where there is constantly adoration. In 1905 the convent had so flourished it was able to make a foundation at Donnybrook. In August 1907 the centenary of the canonization of St. Colette was celebrated in the little chapel in a beautiful manner.

Mother Mary Seraphim is still abbess, and there are now eighteen choir sisters, including novices.

Six years ago the Carlow community sent Mother Mary Geneviève Stead and eight sisters to make a foundation at DONNYBROOK, near Dublin, at the invitation of Mrs. M'Cann, widow of Mr. James M'Cann, M.P., who himself gave his daughter (a Poor Clare) the house and grounds necessary. One of the first novices at St. Damien's convent, Donnybrook, was Mrs. Fitzgerald, widow of Major Fitzgerald of Monkstown, who was received by Mgr. Fitzpatrick at an impressive ceremony when the late Fr. Gallway, S.J., preached.

In giving up her wealth Sister Mary Clare (Mrs. Fitzgerald) arranged for the building of the present convent, where there are now seventeen choir sisters, including novices. This makes two convents of Clare-Colettines in Ireland; one contemplative Urbanist convent; and six communities that lead the active life: a total of nine.



## CHAPTER X

### THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

THE first foundations of Poor Clares in the *United States* were failures : attempts were made to pander to the utilitarian wishes of a new country : the rule was relaxed, the nuns taught or took boarders, and the primitive severity and simplicity of the life was lost. And with it all vigour was lost, and the foundations dwindled and died away. The Lyons sisters write very severely about these early defalcations : "Faire une fondation contraire à la profession qu'on a faite de la Règle séraphique, approuvée par l'Eglise, approuvée par Dieu même, c'est évidemment bâtir sans le concours de Dieu, c'est même travailler contre sa volonté, c'est éloigner la source de ses bénédictions."

In 1792 some of the Poor Clares driven from France by the Revolution took refuge in Maryland, and in 1801 they purchased a lot in Lafayette Street, Georgetown, and opened a school there. Their abbess, Madame Marie de la Marche, died shortly afterwards, and, dispirited and sad, her daughters in 1805 sold their school and returned to Europe.

In 1826 a batch of Belgian Poor Clares went out to Cincinnati at the invitation of the bishop of that town. The bishop said that, in view of the extreme need of Catholic teachers in America, he would dispense them from certain parts of their rule, and he put them in charge of a flourishing school. When the news came to the Abbess Marie-Dominique at Bruges she said : "Their prosperity will not last, for it is not in accord with our holy rule. God cannot wish our rule to be thus muti-

lated, and He will not bless their work." Surely enough, winds and tempests and inundations beat upon their house and ruined it; and in four years, instead of being in prosperity, the sisters were so poor that they lacked even daily bread. In 1839 they returned, broken and penitent, to Bruges.

In 1875 Sister Maria Maddalena and Sister Maria Costanza left their convent of San Lorenzo in Rome, and, by the advice of Pio Nono and the Franciscan Minister-General, sailed for America. They were of noble birth, both daughters of Count Bentivoglio of Bologna, and had been educated at the celebrated Convent of the Sacred Heart on the Monti de Trinita at Rome. They had been eleven years in religion, and had gone through the troublous times of revolution at the suppressions of 1870. Nor were their trials over when they reached the New World; they had so far been under the escort of Mother Mary Ignatius Hayes, tertiary of Mill Hill, whose desire was to establish the Poor Clares at Belle Prairie, Minnesota; but on arrival at New York, for some unexplained reason, the two Poor Clares refused to go on to Belle Prairie, and placed themselves on the hospitality of the different Orders in the city. In their own account of this episode the two nuns throw the responsibility on Fra Paolino, their spiritual adviser, who had accompanied them from Rome, and merely say, "Poor Mother Ignatius felt the refusal very much"! The two sisters called on the Archbishop of New York; he told them he could not admit them to his diocese, as he did not consider their Order in keeping with the spirit of the age or with the trend of the mind of the American people. This was in June, eight months after they had landed on American soil; and the archbishop did not fail to rebuke them for having loitered so long. That they were Italians in a strange city is their good excuse, but doubtless they deserved some rebuke for having failed the lady who had brought them so far. Two or three times the nuns got themselves installed in some

small house, and they even managed to attract two postulants, but ever the ecclesiastical authorities bade them move on.

In the December of 1877 they were at Broadway, Cleveland, Ohio, when the Bishop of Cleveland sent to join them five German sisters from Dusseldorf. "We found it impossible to accustom ourselves to their German ways," write the two Italians, and so once more they moved on. They roamed about collecting funds, and finally, with the help of Mr. John A. Creighton, they, in 1878, settled in OMAHA—at first only in a little wooden cottage. Here one of their novices, Sister Mary Clare (Miss Elizabeth Bailey, of London), died. In 1880 Mr. Creighton proposed to build a monastery for the sisters; the bishop rejected the first designs as too grand for an Order vowed to poverty; simpler plans were prepared, but when the monastery was half built it was demolished by a cyclone. A more simple building still was commenced, and at last, on the 5th of July, 1882, the two nuns and their novices and postulants entered canonical enclosure, and "we commenced to observe fully the strict rule of our holy mother St. Clare."

The following are some few notes on the history of Omaha Monastery since the publication of the *Princess of Poverty*, supplied by the abbess—

"Our beloved foundress, Rev. Mother Constance of Jesus, Bentivoglio, passed from her earthly exile the 29th of January, 1902; she slept calmly and peacefully in the Lord on this day, just after the August Sacrifice had been offered, and as the last words of the General Absolution granted at the hour of death to the members of the Seraphic Order were pronounced by Rev. W. Kuhlman, S.J., surrounded by the entire community. She laboured courageously in the accomplishment of her mission, and was supported amid the countless difficulties that attend such an arduous undertaking by an unwavering trust in Divine Providence. The corner-stone of the chapel of our



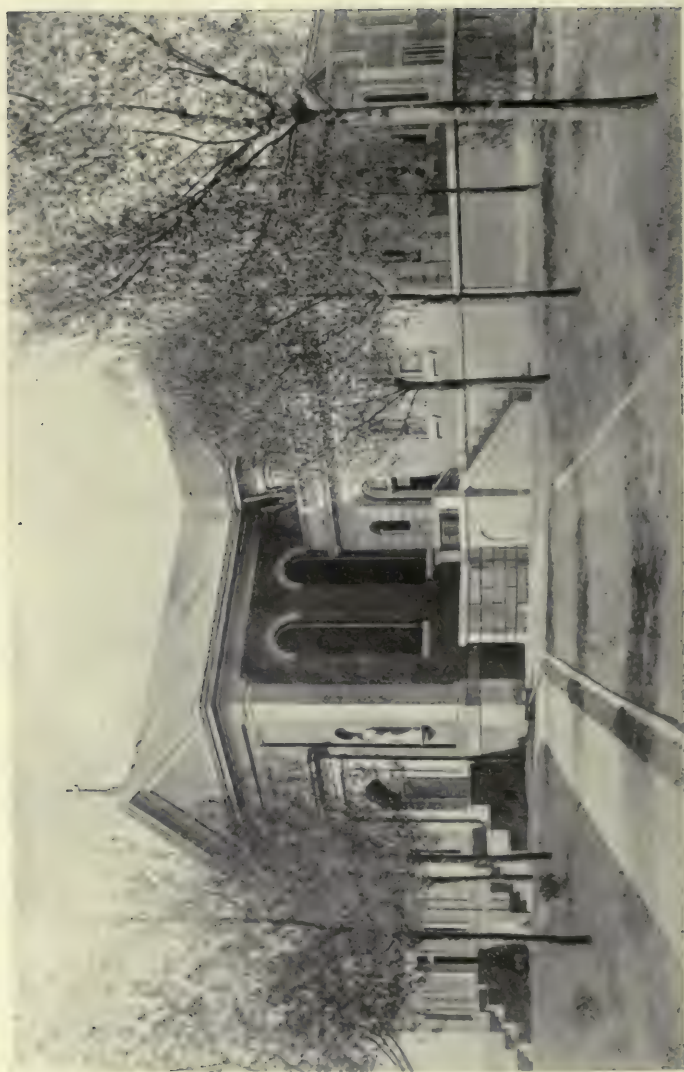
new building was laid the 1st of January, 1903; a number of distinguished fathers were present, and the ceremony was performed by the Right Rev. Richard Scannell, D.D., Bishop of Omaha, Nebraska. There is quite a little history connected with the corner-stone, or rather with the stone that is enclosed in the corner-stone: this stone was a gift from Count Bentivoglio to his sisters and our beloved foundresses, and it was blessed by Pope Leo XIII, of happy memory, in the month of October 1879; this we highly prized, and were most happy to have it in our possession for the occasion of the above-named ceremony. The dedication of our new monastery took place the 15th of September, 1904. The building expenses were paid by the Hon. John A. Creighton, our principal benefactor. It was Count Creighton's custom to attend our ceremonies of reception and profession, and the last one at which he was present was the 18th of November, 1906. In the month of February 1907 our kind, good benefactor was called to his reward; word came to us at midnight, while we were reciting the Divine Office, that he was sinking rapidly. We had the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and continued praying for him until the end came, which was about 1.30 a.m. Exposition was then closed, and we made the way of the Cross for him, and in the morning had a solemn Requiem Mass said for the repose of his soul. Our extern sisters visited him, and a number of Jesuit fathers and Franciscan sisters were present, together with other friends who were also objects of his kindness and charity. As he valued prayer very highly, it was our custom during his lifetime to offer Holy Communion and assist at Holy Mass for him on every Wednesday. We now continue this practice for the repose of his soul, R.I.P. The 8th of May, 1909, a new wing, mortuary vaults and enclosure wall were completed, costing \$50,000. This was paid for by a bequest of Count John A. Creighton. The 21st of September, 1910, Cardinal Vannutelli and his suite, accompanied by our Right Rev. Bishop Scannell and



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Mgr. Colaneri, visited the monastery and entered the enclosure, where we were having exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The sisters led the way to the choir, chanting the *Benedicta Benedictus*. After spending some moments in adoration, the Cardinal proceeded to the library, where he was seated, and each sister kissed his ring and received his blessing. As time was pressing he could not remain long. He spoke a few words in French to us, saying : ' That he came to this country to have the Blessed Sacrament adored, and here we made him adore it.' He also wrote his signature in our Visitors' Book, adding the following : ' That he was most happy to visit this holy asylum ' (in French). The 4th of March, 1911, the remains of our dear Mother M. Constance, and Sister Mary Clare, who was the first professed sister, and who died the 21st of January, 1879, were removed from the Holy Sepulchre cemetery and placed in our mortuary vaults. Rev. M. Bronsgest, S.J., who had been chaplain during the lifetime of our dear Mother M. Constance, and for whom she had great esteem, was present and officiated. Their bodies were solemnly interred. The sight of the coffins was a source of sorrow to the sisters who knew the departed sister, and the good mother to whom they owed so much ; but it was also a great happiness to lay them to rest in the shadow of the tabernacle, so near the Blessed Sacrament, which they both loved so tenderly. As the tombs were not then sealed, after a few days the sisters assembled in the vaults and opened the coffins to pay a last tribute of love. Sister Mary Clare had been buried in an iron coffin, and her habit and beads were perfectly preserved. Her bones were quite white, but after coming in contact with the air they soon turned dark and fell to dust. Rev. Mother M. Constance's face and body were quite solid (the undertaker thought they were turning into stone), but the habit and head-covering had decayed, as she was only buried in a wooden coffin. Some months before, her grave had been opened, and it





OMAHA MONASTERY, U.S.A.

was decided it would be better to wait a while before moving the remains. The glass was broken, and the clay fell in on her face. The sisters now removed it, and clothed her anew in a habit, head-cover and veil. Her face looked so peaceful, and it seemed to say that at last, after all the sorrow and labour it had cost to found the house, it was completed, and now many souls could spend their days here in peace and contentment. It was only necessary to put a veil and head-cover on our dear Sister Mary Clare. Altogether the ceremony was most impressive, a sight which we shall never forget. We then sprinkled the remains with holy water, prayed over them for some time, and replaced them in the vaults. After some days the tombs were sealed.

"We now have thirty-two sisters in the community; four of these are extern sisters. Our time is divided between prayer and work, our chief duty being the recitation of the Divine Office. We spend about six hours of the day in manual labour, and our work is done in community. It consists in our own housework, making our clothing, and we supply two hundred churches and two colleges with altar breads. This is rather difficult, as so many people receive daily Communion, and the demand is ever increasing. We retire at 8 p.m., rise for Matins at 11.45, which lasts for almost two hours, including the time of meditation, then we return to our cells and rise at 5 a.m. The time of prayer is spent in adoration, vocal prayers, meditation and spiritual reading. We have exposition of the most Blessed Sacrament every morning and all day on Sundays, and on feast-days throughout the year, also during Matins at midnight and the Holy Hour. During the months of May and October we have exposition after Matins and recite the fifteen decades of the rosary. It is surprising how many good Catholics have such false ideas about our life; the above are a few simple truths concerning it. As to other details, such as penances, etc., we deem it more prudent to leave these for the eyes of God.



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We would rather speak to the world of God's love and mercy and the sweetness of prayer."

The Archbishop of NEW ORLEANS in 1885 wrote to the Poor Clares of Omaha that two ladies in his city were anxious for an establishment of the Poor Clares there, and were willing to help: he was willing to welcome them. Mother Maddalena and Sister Mary Francis Moran and Sister Mary Colette Murphy therefore repaired to New Orleans, where the Benedictine sisters gave them temporary hospitality. They took a house in Magazine Street, and here for a while the two sisters lived, till at last, in 1891, a new monastery was opened and another sister from Omaha came to join them. Sister Mary Francis was appointed abbess and several vocations were granted, and the convent, though small, is progressing well.

In the autumn of 1911 a foundation was made from this convent to Canada; but it is too early yet to give particulars of this new settlement. Mother Mary Francis Moran has been abbess for nearly twenty-seven years. There are three choir sisters, three novices and two postulants. There are four extern sisters. They follow the primitive rule of St. Clare.

Sister Mary St. Clare Bretmann of EVANSVILLE, Ind., a nun at Omaha, came in for a small inheritance, and wished to devote it to starting a convent of Poor Clares in her native city. The consent of the bishop and minister-general were obtained, and Sister Mary St. Clare and Sister Mary Charitas Burns went to Evansville and secured a piece of land in Kentucky Avenue, and building was commenced. In the summer of 1897 they were joined by seven more sisters from Omaha, and the canonical enclosure was commenced. The convents of Omaha and Evansville are under the direct supervision of the Brothers Minor, and there is canonical visitation once a year. The chapel at Evansville is a handsome Gothic structure, and the convent is flourishing in numbers, but not yet clear of debt.

The present abbess is Mother Francis Farrelly, a relation of the Bishop of Cleveland, and there are twenty-one nuns, five novices, two postulants in the enclosure; and extern, four sisters, three novices and one postulant.

The Rule followed at Omaha and these two daughter convents is the First Rule of Clare.

A foundation at 38 Bennett Street, BOSTON, was made from Evansville in 1906, and has proved very successful. The abbess is Mother M. Charitas Burns, and there are twelve choir nuns, one novice and five postulants; also two extern sisters and three postulants. The convent is unfortunately down in the business part of the town, and has very little garden.

It will be remembered how, in 1877, the two Italian nuns and their novices left CLEVELAND because of the arrival of five German Clares from Dusseldorf. The Dusseldorf nuns are Colettines, and very strict. In the November of 1878 they were joined by two more Clares from Holland: several vocations were also granted them. The result was that they had to seek a larger building, and they moved to a house in Perry Street in 1881: the community then numbered nine professed sisters, two novices and two postulants. Before the sisters took possession of their new convent they had much sickness, probably due to their cramped quarters, and also possibly due to their occasional extreme poverty—for the Americans had not quite grasped the sisters' needs for daily alms at that time. Only by the death of two sisters from typhoid was their distress made known in September 1881, and since then measures have been taken to secure them their few wants. In spite of the new convent and all the alms they needed, sickness still continued. In the Lenten season of 1889 nearly all the sisters were ill, and the physician in attendance prohibited the oil which the sisters used for cooking in Lent, when they forgo butter, eggs and milk. It is far from our desire to throw any glamour over the cloister, and therefore we quote the

following story as to the mortifications in regard to food that were practised at Cleveland : " It sometimes happened that cereals which had been donated were so full of little worms that the cook could not remove them all, no matter how hard she tried. Then Mother Veronica, in her winning way, would invite the sisters, ' Now we must close our eyes and open our mouths, and we shall notice nothing. But you need not eat it if you have not the courage.' " And it is as well to remember, from the detached point of view, that high game and maggoty cheeses are in some households regarded as luxuries. The convent at Perry Street had already been surrounded by many buildings, and the site was crowded and noisy and the convent overlooked. Also, though the foundation was made at Chicago about this time, the number of novices and sisters was steadily increasing, and more room was necessary. So the mother abbess managed to secure a site in West Park, a suburb of Cleveland, and there the nuns moved some six years ago, and there they now serve God. Their present number (1st of January, 1912) is twenty-one choir sisters and six novices ; six extern sisters and one postulant. Their abbesses have been Mother Mary Veronica (foundress), Mother M. Josepha, and at present Mother M. Theresa.

In the year 1893—the year of the World's Fair—Mother Mary Veronica, four choir sisters, two extern sisters and a novice went to CHICAGO to found a monastery of Poor Clares at Laflin Street in this town, known as " the modern Sodom." Friar Kilian had been the moving spirit in inviting the Poor Clares, and Mother Veronica's loving and sympathetic heart longed to have a centre of reparation there in the midst of the wealth and the wickedness. The convent was in one of the new streets—all mud and poor wooden side-walks—and so little was the neighbourhood or their advent known that whole bundles of letters went astray. Yet in a short time the one wing of the new monastery was filled by fervent novices and postulants,



and it became necessary to complete the whole plan. It so happened that building materials were cheap, owing to the break-up of the World's Fair. But the hardships were great—there was no proper warming system—the cold at night was intense. In truth the poverty enjoined by the saintly Mother Mary Veronica seems to have been excessive; her practical powers were not so perfect as her spiritual skill.

The first little flower called in Chicago—Sister M. Clare—died of pulmonary tuberculosis in 1900; in 1903 Sister M. Antonie, who had only been professed a little over two years, also died. And in 1905 came the greatest loss—the death of the Mother Mary Veronica, who had been thirty-six years in religion and was sixty years of age.

There is a beautiful book, *A Cloistered Life*, published by the Catholic Company at Cleveland and written by the Poor Clares, which tells the whole story of Mother Mary Veronica, foundress of the Poor Clare-Colettines in the United States. She was born at Oldenburg, Germany, of illustrious family, and dropped her family name and title to become a Poor Clare at Dusseldorf. She was sent to America under obedience in the position of abbess, but she never felt herself very fitted for ruling; her sweetness was greater than her strength, and in those early days that little band of German sisters had much to put up with. The externs could only speak German, and could not make themselves understood when out begging, and they were often insulted, and not infrequently lost their way. On their return their beloved abbess would insist on taking off their mud-encased boots and bathing their sore feet with her own hands. After some years Mother Mary Veronica was, at her earnest request, relieved of the office of abbess at Cleveland, and allowed more time for prayer—and also for arranging for the Chicago convent. She compiled a special Office of Reparation to be said on first Fridays at Chicago, and she also compiled a Customs Book. There are some very pretty stories of her humility



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and tenderness: how she insisted on kneeling to the young abbeß, Mother Theresa, at Cleveland; how she wandered about in the bitter cold at night putting extra coverings on the sick and delicate. Pretty, too, is the story of how she insisted on tramps being relieved at Chicago, and of how a "professor" of modelling managed to get from her an order for materials and then disappeared. Her goodness of heart and her deep piety endeared her to all; and though she suffered much from spiritual tribulations she was always bright and loving with her sisters. One little story we will take from *A Cloistered Life*: "In 1898 Mother Theresa at Cleveland was attacked by throat trouble, and wrote to tell Mother Veronica at Chicago that she was unable to use her voice, and begged her to return to her old community for a time. With permission of the Most Rev. Archbishop, Mother Veronica started for Cleveland with an extern sister. With mingled feelings of deep emotion she found herself once more in the little chapel, the preparation of which had once been to her so dear a labour of love, and where she had received so many graces. How the good extern sisters rejoiced to have their dear mother with them again! They would not let her leave them until they had prepared food for her—but after she had eaten they could keep her no longer, for Mother Theresa and all the community were waiting at the enclosure door to receive her with due solemnity. As soon as the door opened Mother Veronica knelt down to ask the blessing of her former spiritual daughter, while Mother Theresa also knelt to beg that of her mother. At first neither would yield, but finally they agreed each to bless the other, for both needed the blessing of God. A line of march was formed, and the Rev. Mother was led to the choir during the singing of the Magnificat. After a few moments of prayer she was conducted to a seat of honour in the parlour, and addresses and poems of welcome in German and English were recited. On the morning after her arrival, when the bell

rang for work, she was the first to make her appearance in the kitchen, ready to clean the vegetables for dinner."

If, as head of an institution, Mother Veronica showed some failings, she showed none as spiritual head of a community. She could be very stern with a peevish novice, very downright with a self-satisfied postulant. She had no hesitation in dismissing unsatisfactory candidates—her ideal for the cloister was very high. She never allowed her own worldly name and rank to be mentioned, nor that of any of the sisters—her personal humility was extreme, and her detachment from the world; but she knew well how to maintain the dignity of the glorious Order to which she belonged.

Mother Mary Veronica is buried within the cloister at Chicago; her works live after her.

Mother Mary Josepha died in 1908, and was succeeded by the present abbess, Mother Coletta (Gardiner), one of those who first came from Cleveland to Chicago.

There are twenty-three choir sisters, two novices, three postulants and seven extern sisters now in residence.

#### CANADA.

After the establishment of the Poor Clares at Lourdes in 1876 vocations were numerous, and there came to the convent the cry from New France to establish the Order of Poor Clares in Canada. Several young ladies in Canada were drawn towards the rule of the Virgin of Assisi and desirous of the habit; but the negotiations went slowly, and in July 1898 five of these demoiselles set sail from New York to seek the cloister in Old France. One of these girls, to whom a rich marriage was offered, wrote in departing: "*O mon Jésus, alors même qu'un prince m'offrirait un paradis terrestre, c'est à vous que je donne mes éternelles préférences. Avec votre pauvreté, vos humiliations, votre couronne d'épines et votre croix, vous*"

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serez toujours mon préféré, mon unique et mon tout. . . . La soif de la souffrance me dévore. Je ne serai satisfaite que lorsque je serai épuisée, que j'aurai donné jusqu'à la dernière goutte de mon sang pour Jésus. Quand même nous irions au fond de l'eau, nous voulons être où Jésus nous appelle. On va aussi bien à lui sur mer que sur terre. . . . Ne pleurez pas, c'est notre bonheur que vous pleurez." On the 4th of July the boat on which they sailed—*La Bourgogne*—was in collision with the *Cromartyshire*, and sank. Amongst the passengers were three Dominican fathers : at their feet the five maidens calmly knelt for the last absolution, and then, rising, they sang the *Salve Regina*, till the waters engulfed them. Their names deserve record—they are names which link together the Old World and the New : Reine and Laure Barcelo, Emilia Morin, Anna Cauchon and Anaïde Létourneau.

It was a terrible grief to the Catholics of Montreal, and the nuns at Lourdes felt that they were called this time to venture the voyage—to go over and help. In April 1902 they set forth, five in number, in some dim way trying to replace the five victims of that disastrous collision. The chronicle of the Grotto of Lourdes gives a picturesque account of their departure : "On Thursday last, the 17th of April, at six in the morning, the doors of the convent of the Poor Clares of Lourdes opened to make way for five humble daughters of St. Clare, who, near the old bridge and castle of this town of Mary, offer themselves as victims to God for the salvation of souls.

"They were Sister Marie Joseph of Jesus (Marie Louise Lemoine of the diocese of Laval), Sister Mary Francis of the Five Wounds (Helene Desparroiz of the diocese of Montreal), Sister Mary of Jesus (Eugénie Piché of the diocese of Montreal), Sister Mary of St. Paul and Jesus (Marie Hurtulise of Montreal), and Marie-Magdalene of Jesus (novice of the diocese of Montpellier), who, with the sanction and benediction of Mgr. Schæpfer, in reply to the request of Mgr. Emard, Bishop of Valleyfield, left







VALLEYFIELD MONASTERY, QUEBEC.

their twenty-four companions of Lourdes to found in Canada a new house of the Order.

"At the appearance of these saintly nuns—clothed in a rough habit of brown, and with sandals of wood that only served to make walking more painful—all heads were respectfully uncovered, and tears started to every eye.

"Some fifty persons escorted them to the Grotto, where their ecclesiastical superior celebrated a farewell Mass, at which fifteen nuns communicated with a fervour and humility that all those who witnessed this simple yet grand spectacle can never forget."

The foundresses then visited Mgr. Schœpfer at his house, for a final episcopal benediction, and were then taken to visit the local sanctuaries, which some of them had never before seen. Then, singing the well-known hymn—

"Nous nous reverrons aux cieux,"

they departed by train for Havre.

In recommending these nuns to the Bishop of Valleyfield (near Montreal), the Bishop of Tarbes had written: "They are absolutely faithful to the spirit of their vocation—the spirit of obedience, of simplicity, of penance and of poverty."

The voyage was rough, and the poor nuns suffered considerably, but they arrived safely at Valleyfield, and had with them a piece of rock from the Grotto at Lourdes, and also a large statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. Until their own little convent was ready for them they lived with the sisters of the Holy Family, and the inauguration ceremony was of a splendour that bewildered the humble nuns. At the head of the procession was the bishop, followed by the clergy; then came the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, drawn by two white horses. Then the carriages of the principal ladies of the town—one nun in each carriage, together with her hostess. Sister Marie Joseph de Jesus is still abbess of this community, and the number of choir

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sisters has increased to twenty-two ; novices three, postulants two ; extern sisters, six.

There is one other community of Poor Clares in Canada : a foundation from New Orleans in the autumn of 1911, but not yet fully established.

## CHAPTER XI

### SAINTS AND BLESSEDS OF THE ORDER

THE Poor Clares number five saints and eighteen blessed who have attained holiness in their Order : there are also other causes introduced, but not yet ratified. It is frequent with enthusiastic peoples, like the Italians, for instance, for the public voice to give the title of Saint without the sanction of the Church. Now-a-days the process of canonization is very slow, and Holy Church is very rigid in her rules and careful in her inquiries. So that the following names are far from including all those who have lived saintly lives within a Clariase cloister.

Of the five saints, St. Clare, St. Colette and St. Agnes of Assisi are dealt with elsewhere, and only Catherine of Bologna and St. Veronica Juliana are included here. Of the blessed—one, Blessed Agnes of Bohemia, is dealt with in Chapter V, and the following have brief notices here : Philippa Mareria, Helen of Padua, Margaret Colonna, Matthia Nazzarei, Marie Magdalene Martinengo, Antonia of Florence, Felicia Meda, Seraphine Sforza, Eustochia of Calafato, Paula of Montaldo, Baptista Varani ; Salome, Cunegund and Yolande of Poland ; Isabelle of France, and Louise of Savoy.

ST. CATHERINE OF BOLOGNA, virgin, was born in 1413 and died on the 9th of March, 1463, in the fiftieth year of her age. She was canonized in 1724. Of noble family, she passed three years at the Court of Ferrara in attendance on the Princess Margaret, but when the Princess married, Catherine, though only thirteen, joined the third Order of St. Francis, and gradually gathered round her a small company of other ladies who desired to live the



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consecrated life. More and more was Catherine drawn to penance and prayer, and at last in 1432 the Provincial of the Friars Minor gave the small community the first rule of St. Clare, and called some Clarisses from Mantua to found a convent for the new sisters. Catherine was specially devoted to St. Thomas of Canterbury, and on one occasion he appeared to her and bade her ever cool the fever of work with the calm of prayer; and thereafter she averred that "during the duties imposed by the abbess she had tasted the sweetness of prayer much more than when she applied herself to orison in the choir." At Ferrara they still have a drinking vessel said to have been given to St. Catherine by St. Joseph, and which is exposed to the veneration of the faithful at the convent on the 19th of March. For years there floated before St. Catherine a mystical overflowing chalice, of which she had to drink, but which filled her with agony in the drinking.

In 1456 Catherine and fifteen other religious went to Bologna to make a foundation there—the famous monastery of *Corpus Domini*, of which St. Catherine was first abbess. She guided her sisters rather by example than authority, as St. Clare in her Testament had recommended, and the monastery flourished most exceedingly. Catherine in a vision saw the Infant Jesus, and leant forward and kissed him—ever after she bore a mark on her lip. But all her visions were not sweet; she was terribly tempted by demons, and had great interior trials. After having fought the good fight, she died a peaceful death. Her body was buried for a brief time, but after a few days uncovered that she might work miracles. It is now to be seen at the convent in a glass case: the Saint is seated, and the hands, face and feet are uncovered. She left many writings, of which one, "On the Seven Spiritual Aims," has been translated into English.

The convent grew till it became almost a village, and in the sixteenth century there were over two hundred choir sisters and fifty externes. It became necessary to

found another convent—St. Bernardine—in Bologna, and that, too, soon numbered one hundred sisters. And here lived and died Pudentienne Zagnoni—one of those perfect souls of whom the world will probably hear more hereafter. These Clares have the Urbanist rule. There are some fine frescoes in the convent done by one of the Poor Clares, some say by St. Catherine herself; also a picture of St. Ursula by her is exhibited in the gallery at Bologna. During the Napoleonic invasion the Clares were expelled, and though several returned in 1816, the monastery has never resumed its old glory, and most of the buildings are now used as barracks.

There is a beautiful saying of St. Catherine that forms an excellent prelude to meditation—"Oh Consciousness that I am nothing, you give entrance to Him who is infinite!"

ST. VERONICA JULIANA was born in 1660, became a Poor Clare Capuchin at the age of seventeen, and died in 1727. She was canonized in 1839. The little town of Città di Castello in Northern Italy—hidden away in a valley in the Apennines—is famous for many Saintly memories—for many Franciscan memories; and here it was that St. Veronica became that perfect model of obedience that makes her the example for every novice of to-day. Here they still show her poor but tidy cell, and tell how St. Veronica desired ever the most patched habit, but by her own washing made it ever the most clean. On Good Friday 1697, when following the Passion in an agony of prayer, Veronica received the Sacred Stigmata, and for twenty-nine years bore these wounds. She strove ever to conceal them, but under obedience showed them to her confessor and the bishop. The wound in the side penetrated to the heart, of which the soufflé could be heard. There have been too many well-authenticated cases of this sort for the psychologist to dare ignore them; that when in meditation on a suffering the mental agony may become so great as to cause external marks,

is a fact for the most materialistic ; what it means in the spiritual life only the religious can—and will not—tell. To St. Veronica also was given a crown of thorns, though the saint generally so represented in art is St. Catherine Ricci.

A novice trained by St. Veronica at Città di Castello, named Lucrèce Ceoli, has since been declared venerable. In 1773 three religious were sent to found a convent at Mercatello, which still exists. In 1810 the convent at Città was suppressed, but after a few years the nuns gathered there again, and a few still keep up the old rigour of the rule.

The Blessed PHILIPPA OF MARERIA died in 1236 ; Wadding does not give the date of her birth. Her veneration was confirmed by Innocent IV, and Pius VII granted an office in her honour. Designed for marriage by her family, Philippa ran away from home and made herself a hermitage on a neighbouring mountain. She cut off her hair and adopted a nun-like dress. Several other young girls secretly joined her, and her brother Thomas—who knew of the hermitage—undertook to build them a convent in the town of Mareria. They accepted, and on entering followed the rule of the Poor Ladies—Philippa acting as abbess.

Philippa died young, surrounded by her sisters, and comforted by the ministrations of Friar Roger. She is noteworthy as being the first Poor Clare to be honoured by a public cult—even in the lifetime of the foundress of the Order. Her body is preserved uncorrupt to this day.

The Blessed HELEN OF PADUA was born in 1208 of the illustrious family of the Enselmi ; she died in 1242, and Innocent XII approved her veneration in 1695. She entered the monastery of Arcella at a very early age, and became at once famous for her powers of silence. The convent is supposed to have been founded by St. Agnes of Assisi in the lifetime of St. Clare. The Blessed Helen



was tried by great bodily suffering : she became dumb, then blind, then paralytic ; and for sixteen years she could not move save to make those signs she and her sisters had instituted instead of speech. For three months before her death she was unable to take food, and how she sustained life was a miracle to those about her. Her body still remains far from corruption, and many miracles are attested to her credit. The whole story of Helen of Padua, as told by Wadding, is most interesting from the medical and psychological point of view. She would have been a splendid case for Lourdes.

The Blessed MARGARET COLONNA was born in Rome early in the thirteenth century, and ran away from home and made herself a little hermitage on the hill above Palestrina, where she lived in poverty and penance. Hearing that a community of Franciscans were attacked with plague, Margaret sallied forth and begged alms and provisions, and carried it to them just when they were in great want. The brothers encouraged her to go to the convent at Assisi, but a serious illness stopped her. She went to Rome, where her brother was now Cardinal Colonna, and he approached the Pope about founding a convent at Palestrina. Consent was given, according to the Urbanist rule, and there Margaret lived for many years. Towards the end she suffered from a long and painful illness, borne with the utmost resignation. She died on the 30th of December, 1264, Cardinal Colonna giving her the last sacraments. Her convent was removed to St. Silvestre in Capite, within the walls of Rome, after her death, and it is there that English-speaking Catholics now worship in the Eternal City.

The Blessed MATTHIA, virgin, was born in 1234 and died on the 28th of December, 1300. Her veneration was approved by Clement XIII in 1765. Matthia belonged to the noble Italian family of Nazzarei, and when the time came when her father would have her marry, Matthia ran away to the convent at Matelica and insisted on being



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received. Shortly after her profession she was elected abbess, and she ruled for over forty years with mingled dignity and humility. The people scarcely waited for her death before, in true Italian fashion, proclaiming her a saint, and her funeral was a veritable pageant and marked by many miracles. In 1756, when the church was being repaired, the bishop had her body uncovered—it was perfectly preserved and exhaled a sweet perfume: the bishop had it placed under the high altar and reported the facts to Rome. In 1758 it was discovered that a trickle of blood proceeded from the body that had miraculous properties. This wonder still continues.

The Blessed MARY MAGDALENE MARTINENGO, virgin, was born in 1687, daughter of the Count Martinengo of Barco in Brescia. At seven years of age, poor child, she was already torn between the breviary and two volumes of romance that lay on her shelves, but she was preserved from all grave faults by her spirit of prayer and her love of silence. At the age of twenty she took the veil at the convent of Poor Clares at Brescia, who follow the Capuchin reform. Excessive mortifications reduced the young nun to death's door, and the doctors hastily summoned pronounced her dying. But she lived—lived to see the error of her fervour. For two long years she was confined to her cell, so weak, so languid, prayer was impossible, and the observance of the holy rule seemed an intolerable penance. But when she got better that desire for self-immolation again obsessed her—she burnt the name of Jesus on her flesh with a hot iron, she took a vow never to eat fruit, observing that she still took pleasure in that one dish. As an abbess, Mary Magdalene forbade to others the pains she had herself adopted. The chief miracle that marks this saint, is that on one occasion when approaching the grille to receive communion, the Sacred Host—visibly to all the nuns—flew from the priest's hands to the lips of the famishing sister.

Her death took place in 1737, and she was beatified by Leo XIII in 1900.

The Blessed ANTONIA OF FLORENCE was born in 1401 and died in 1472. Her veneration was approved by Pius IX in 1847. Antonia was the daughter of respectable parents and was early engaged to marry, but death removed her spouse. She thereupon entered a convent of tertiaries, but found the rule too easy to satisfy her thirst for suffering. St. John Capistran was Franciscan General at the time, and he sympathized with her longing, and bade her take up the duties of abbess at the convent of Corpus Domini in Aquila, under the first rule of St. Clare. With such fervour did she rule the convent, that her light shone far and drew many to that harbour: soon she had one hundred sisters within the walls, who chanted day and night the divine office. After her death her body retained its beauty and suppleness, so that to this day the eyes are open, and the sisters are able with care to put on a new habit when necessary.

The Blessed FELICIA MEDA of Milan, virgin, was born in 1378; at the age of twenty-two she sold all her worldly goods and gave the money to the poor, and took the habit in the convent of St. Ursula. After many years she was elected abbess and ruled with mildness and care, governing her daughters by love, and ever giving consolation to the sick. St. Bernardine of Sienna in reforming the Order wrote and encouraged Felicia in her glorious work, and she thereupon entered on the enterprise of founding a convent at Pesaro. For four years she governed this new convent according to the strict rule, and then she died at the age of sixty-six, having been twenty-two years in religion. Her veneration was approved by Pius VII. In her convent at Pesaro Seraphine Sforza found beatitude, and the two blessed were often seen on the walls of the town after their death—guarding the city they loved so well.

The Blessed SERAPHINE SFORZA was born in 1434 and

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died in 1478; her veneration was approved by Benedict XIV. She was born at Urbino, daughter of the Count of Montefeltro, and her mother was a Colonna. She was married to Alexander Sforza, who treated her with great cruelty, so that at last she fled to the Poor Clares' convent: Alexander desired nothing better—he was now free to live his shameful life. Seraphine was an example of humility and fervour, and was allowed to make her profession—having taken off her earthly wedding ring and sent it back to Alexander. In 1475 she was elected abbess, but only for three more years was her earthly life to endure. Her husband had spread the most vile calumnies about her, but now the hand of God struck him with mortal illness, and he was glad to come to the grate and seek her forgiveness and withdraw his slanders.

The Blessed EUSTOCHIA of Calafato, virgin, was born in 1430 and died in 1484: her veneration was approved by Pope Pius VI. Eustochia was born in Sicily—legend says in a stable in which her mother took refuge from a pestilence which was devastating Messina. From her youth up she heard the voice calling her—sometimes sweetly, sometimes sternly—to the religious life, and she gained her parents' permission to join the Poor Clares of Bassicano in her nineteenth year. But the rule was not severe enough to satisfy her, and in 1458 she founded another convent, the Mount of Virgins, to which she retired with her sister and her niece. It is again to be noted that these strong souls carry with them into the cloister their worldly relations. Three times in succession Eustochia was nominated abbess, and under her rule the convent grew in numbers and position. She was a great wonder-worker, and many cures are reported to her credit. When fifty-four years of age she heard the summons of death, and she gathered her sisters round her and for one hour discoursed to them on the Passion of the Saviour. Then intoning the psalm "*Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce viglio,*" she passed to her rest.



The Blessed PAULA of Montaldo was born in 1443 and died in 1514; she was beatified by Pope Pius IX in 1866. At the early age of fifteen Paula entered the convent of St. Lucy at Mantua. There is another convent at Mantua that is notorious for the fact that ten princesses of the Malateste family entered it, and most of them acted as abbess there or elsewhere; that convent is called the Holy Sacrament. The convent of St. Lucy followed the Urbanist rule—and that with some laxity; but when Paula grew up she was elected abbess, and strove for reform and greater strictness. She would never go to the grille except for matters of necessity; she could not console herself with only five communions a year, and secured the privilege of more; she lived in every way a life of negation towards this world, of aspiration towards the next. When fifty-six years of age she was called to heaven. After death her body remained supple and uncorrupt. At the suppression of the Mantua convents by Joseph II in 1782, the body was removed to Volta, where it is now to be seen in *festas* under the altar of the Holy Virgin.

The Blessed BAPTISTA VARANI was born in 1458: at the age of twenty-three she took the habit at Urbino, but a few years later she returned to her native town of Camerino and made a foundation there, just outside the north-west gate. Her father, the Prince of Camerino, wanted to endow the convent for her—but she would not allow it: she was strong in her fortitude and in her love of poverty. Baptista was one of the scholars of the second Order, and her letters and memoirs are of rare value, not only for their charm of language, but for their spirituality of thought. Quotations can be found in the *Auréole Séraphique*; here we must confine ourselves to one homely and beautiful picture: "The second Friday after our entry into the convent at Camerino, I was in the infirmary with my sister Constance, she spinning on one side of the fire and I sewing on the other. Constance



began to sing the Canticle of our Father Francis : ' Anima benedetta dell' alto Creatore.' When she had finished the first strophe I took up the second, and so on, till she came to the words, ' Behold these hands—Behold these feet—Behold this side ! ' I could go no further. I swooned in my sister's arms. She thought it was a physical faint, such as overcame me at times, but she was mistaken. I was struck senseless by a sudden apparition of the Holy Virgin holding in her arms the body of her Son. I had an agonizing vision of the descent from the cross."

Vocations became so numerous at Camerino that Baptista obtained a special decree from the Pope, limiting their number to forty-five. In 1505 she made a foundation at Fermo. She died in 1527, and when in 1593 they opened her tomb, they found her flesh indeed decayed, but her tongue was intact and red and fresh—perhaps because of the blessed words it had so often spoken. John of Parma is also buried at Camerino.

From her tomb the Blessed Baptista still speaks to her sisters to warn them of the approach of death. When one is about to die, certain taps are distinctly heard. And so when a sister is sick, the others go and listen with an ear pressed to the tomb of Baptista.

She was beatified in 1843, and in 1878 Leo XIII opened the cause for her canonization.

The Blessed SALOME, virgin, was born in 1201, died in 1268. Her veneration was approved by Clement IX. She was the daughter of the Duke of Cracow, and was at the age of three affianced to Coloman, King of Gallica. She grew up a model of innocence and candour, and when the time for marriage arrived, both she and her husband took a vow of chastity. After twelve years of work and prayer together, Coloman was killed in battle against the Tartars, and his widow became a Poor Lady in the convent of Strala, where she long fulfilled the office of abbess. When death came near in the sixty-seventh year of her age, she would not let the sisters pray for her recovery—

she was weary for heaven, of which she was granted the sweetest visions. It seemed to those who watched that her soul passed as a star from her mouth, and mounted to the skies. Her body was removed to Cracow, where it lies in a chapel specially dedicated to her memory, in the convent of Poor Clares close to the old palace. Since the fourteenth century the Poor Clares have inhabited this convent, and it is rich in treasures, but the richest of all is the reliquary of the Blessed Salome.

The Blessed CUNEGUND was born in 1224 and died in 1292; her veneration was approved by Pope Alexander VIII. She was given in marriage to the Duke of Poland, but both she and her husband took a vow of chastity before the Bishop of Cracow, and she is entered as a virgin in the Church's annals. She founded a convent of Poor Clares at Sandec under the first rule, and lived there the last thirteen years of her life. She always went barefoot, and always fasted; she accepted no mitigations. An invasion of Tartars once forced the nuns to fly to a fastness in the Carpathians, but their fortress was discovered and the enemy advanced. Cunegund set herself to prayer, and an invisible force dispersed the Tartars, and the nuns were saved. She died on the 24th of July, 1292, and her early biographers say that nearly one hundred corpses were miraculously resuscitated at her tomb.

Of this convent it is reported that the abbess possessed fifty-four villages! However, a fire in 1764 and other misfortunes reduced the institution to more Franciscan poverty, and now it possesses no land, save a little garden given it in 1873 by the Emperor Francis-Joseph.

The Blessed YOLANDE was a younger sister of Cunegund, by whom she was brought up at the Court of Cracow. She married Boleslas the Pious, and had three children she trained in the practice of religion. After her husband died she married two of her daughters, and with her youngest retired to the convent at Sandec, where her sister was abbess. After the death of Cunegund,

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Yolande had the convent removed to Gnesen for greater safety, and there she served as abbess till her death in 1298. Her veneration was approved by Urban VIII and confirmed by Leo XII as late as 1827.

The Blessed ISABEL OF FRANCE was born in 1225 and died on the 23rd of February, 1270. In 1521 Leo X approved her cult and permitted her an Office and special feast. This princess was daughter of Louis VIII and Blanche of Castile; from an early age she thirsted for knowledge, and learned Latin that she might study the Bible and the Fathers. But she was also celebrated for her skill with the needle, and embroidered many beautiful pieces of Church linen. Her brother, St. Louis, often joined her in her prayers, alms-giving and penances, and both grew up in holiness and grace. Conrad, son of Frederic II, sought Isabel in marriage, but she appealed to the Pope and told him of her vow of chastity; he regretted the marriage could not take place for the sake of peace, but he recognized in Isabel such obvious signs of a vocation that he aided her in her determination. After the death of her mother, Blanche of Castile, the Princess Isabel set about founding at Longchamps the convent of the "Humility of Our Lady," being aided in every way by her brother the King. The rule of St. Clare seemed somewhat strict for those used to a Court life, and who proposed to follow Isabel into seclusion; therefore certain mitigations were granted by the Pope to this royal monastery of Longchamps—as it was generally called. Four humble Clares from Rheims, with Isabel of Venice as abbess, came to train these noble dames in the paths of penance. For nine years Isabel lived in the cloister, then at the age of forty-five passed peacefully away, her sisters hearing the hymns with which the angels greeted her. In 1637 her body was exhumed by permission of Urban VIII and was placed in a golden shrine.

Blanche, daughter of St. Louis, followed her aunt into Longchamps, but did not otherwise follow in her foot-





BLESSED ISABELLE OF FRANCE.





steps : for we find the Princess Blanche first getting a dispensation to go out when she wished ; then to receive visitors of either sex ; then to have two servants to wait on her. It is explained that she had bad health, and that the visitors were surgeons to let blood, and so on ; but still these "royal" monasteries undoubtedly got very lax in many cases.

In 1439 we find William of Casale unable to reform this monastery, and so handing its direction over to the Bishop. Amongst other things, he complains that their music is more worldly than monastic. How Pius X would have appreciated such a complaint !

The Blessed LOUISE OF SAVOY was born on the 28th of December, 1462 ; entered a convent of Poor Clares in 1492 ; died the 24th of July, 1503, and was beatified by Gregory XVI in 1839. Daughter of Amédée IX, Duke of Savoy, she from her youth up showed no love of worldly things, and ever desired the religious life. Compelled to marry in her nineteenth year, she found in her husband, the young Prince de Chalons, another religious soul, and together they set their vassals an example of simplicity and faith. Her husband died in 1490, and Louise—still only twenty-seven years old—refused the offers of marriage that were brought to her and joined the third Order of St. Francis. In 1492 she received the habit of a Poor Clare at Orbe : before being received her confessor made her beg through the town of which she had been sovereign. She was professed in 1493, and rejoiced in a life of silence and seclusion till her death in 1503. She infinitely preferred the brown habit to the royal purple ; she found keen delight in bodily mortifications ; her prompt obedience was the astonishment of the other religious. Worn out by penance rather than age, she rejoiced to meet death : "Adieu, my sisters," she said. "I depart for Paradise, where is all that is most beautiful !" Then she folded her hands in prayer and said : "Mary, Mother, deign to receive my soul," and so she passed away.

## CAUSES INTRODUCED.

The following causes are in process of formation—

The Ven. Florida Ceoli, to whom we have referred as a disciple of St. Veronica.

The Ven. Clare Isabelle Gherzi, whose story is told in the chapter on "Gubbio."

The Ven. Antonia Maria Belloni, virgin; died 1719.

The Ven. Febronia Ansaloni, virgin of Palermo. 1718.

The Ven. Luigia Biagini, lay-sister at the Urbanist convent in Lucca—that town which boasts St. Zita, the domestic servant, as saint.

Ven. Jeanne Marie de la Croix, who founded five monasteries, and died at Roveredo in 1673. Her monasteries were founded under certain mitigations approved in 1665; thus her nuns wore sandals, and ate meat on feast-days; they rose at one for the night office. In spite of these relaxations, the Mother Jeanne Marie demanded great detachment and mortification on the part of her religious.

Ven. Angela Maria Astorch of Barcelona, founded the monasteries at Saragossa and Murcia in Spain. In the first year of her profession she was made novice-mistress, and whilst still young became abbess. She was particularly celebrated for her humility and charity. In 1661, at the age of sixty-two, she became hungry for heaven, and passed into a child-like state, almost imbecile, so that she had, to her great joy, to be freed from office. She died in 1665.

Ven. Mary of Agreda, author of the *Mystical City of God*, a book about which there are two opinions. Highly praised by some, others have found it involved and stilted.

Ven. Mary of Jesus, Mexican conceptionist.

Ven. Girolama of the Assumption of Manilla.

## MARTYRS.

The Order has also had its martyrs. In 1259 the Tartars invaded Poland and took Cracow; they entered the monastery of Poor Clares and killed all the religious, to the number of sixty.

In 1291 Ptolemais in Syria was besieged by Malek-el-Aschraf, Sultan of Egypt; the town capitulated, and the abbess of the Poor Clares collected her sisters, and, telling them the Saracens were at the gate, advised them to disfigure their faces in order to preserve their chastity. She thereupon cut off her nose, and every one of the sixty-four sisters promptly followed her example. The Saracens rushed in, sword in hand, and were struck with horror and fury—they massacred them all.

During the French Revolution the Poor Clares longed for martyrdom, and envied their sixteen Carmelite sisters who fell by the guillotine: but this execution was not granted to any Poor Clare. Many, however, died in prison at this time—for the prisons were very crowded and the hardships great. And perhaps the petty martyrdoms were as much trials of courage as the scaffold.

It is told of one poor old nun that in turning her out of her convent the soldiers found her discipline, and that they thereupon drove her down the public street before them, "striking her with rude and cruel blows."

In 1558 the Turks took Minorea, burnt the Poor Clares' convent, and killed Sister Agatha Amarella.

Of how universally faithful unto death the Poor Clares have been, perhaps the best evidence is that, through all the vicissitudes of the Order, we can only find two "apostates"—one at Nüremberg in the time of Luther, and one at Geneva in the time of Calvin.



## CHAPTER XII

### CERTAIN CONVENTS OF NOTE

#### ASSISI.

THE story of the Poor Clares of Assisi from the time they left St. Damiano and moved into the big new convent in the town is not without incident. The body of St. Clare, which had reposed in the chapel of St. George—now the nuns' choir—was buried beneath the high altar in 1260, which altar was consecrated by Clement IV in 1263. In 1810 the nuns were turned out by the soldiers of Napoleon, who used the convent as a barracks and did much damage. Most of their precious relics and many priceless MSS. were then lost, and when, after four years, the nuns returned, they with difficulty cleaned up the convent bit by bit. After the finding of the body of St. Francis beneath the high altar of his church, the nuns were fired to uncover the body of St. Clare, and received permission to undertake this their ambition. They set about the work in the autumn of 1850. It happened that Canon Chadwick of Ushaw was travelling in Italy at this time, and whilst he was at Perugia he heard about the proposed opening of the tomb of St. Clare, and obtained permission to be present. He wrote a letter to the Poor Clares of Scorton Hall (now of Darlington) describing the scene, in the course of which he says—

“Then began the severing in two of the iron straps which bound the coffin, during which proceeding the Bishop of Perugia and another remained in the vault. I offered to hold the Bishop of Perugia's candle, which offer he, good man, graciously accepted—but not without a smile, as much as to say, ‘It is not merely to oblige me you do this!’ Thus I secured a place below in the vault.

"I cannot express what intense anxiety I felt while the smiths were cutting through the iron straps, how often I thought of the nuns, and how often I wished we might thus go and visit St. Cuthbert at Durham. At length all was ready for raising the lid. Two more bishops, a medical man and three or four more witnesses were summoned down into the vault. When they had entered a curtain was let down at the opening, in order, as much as possible, to prevent the air from affecting the body of the saint, should it be found entire. After this they began, with ropes which ran through pulleys, to raise the lid. To our pious disappointment the sweet virgin saint was not found entire. The skull was perfect, but lay at one side, as if the coffin had been too short, and detached from the bones of the neck. The chest had fallen in, and I could not discover many rib-bones. On her breast was a laurel branch and a crown of flowers.

"When the lid of the coffin was put aside an excommunication was read against any one taking the least particle away.

"We then went up into the church. The medical men and other witnesses examined the remains, and gave their account in writing. The veneration of the relics then began. After the bishops had been down, the Bishop of Assisi went out of the church, and came back leading after him all the good nuns, novices and lay-sisters. It was a most affecting sight. I bit my lips, and looked savage, and pulled my mouth, and made my eyes look very round : but it was no use ! I could hear the devotional sighs and sobs of the nuns as they passed, and see their handkerchiefs stealing up under their veils—and there was an end of our composure and dignity ! We cried as heartily as they did !

"Poor things ! How devoutly they viewed, and how affectionately they kissed, the remains of their holy mother and foundress !

"When they had satisfied their devotion they glided out

of the church like angels, singing the *Te Deum*. We were allowed to touch the sacred remains with beads and crosses. I touched the head with my beads, which I have broken and not used since : I intend a portion for the good sisters of Scorton."

The body was exposed for public veneration, and carried round the town of Assisi in procession. Loccatelli gives some of the letters written from and to the Poor Clares at this time. We quote first from the letter of the Abbess of St. Chiara to the Abbess at Marseilles—

"To the Poor Monastery of St. Clare of Marseilles, 10 October, 1850.

"MY REVEREND AND BELOVED MOTHER "

(There is a description of the finding then)—"We respectfully unfolded on a table the religious habit, the mantle, the tunic and the hair shirt of our mother, and then for five hours we feasted our eyes and hearts on these touching memorials of poverty and penitence. You may think with what sweet emotion we were moved, as were also the bishop and the priests who were with him. How we gazed on the white skin slippers our mother had made for our Father Francis to protect the wounds of his sacred stigmata.<sup>1</sup> How we gathered up the lint saturated with his blood ! Here was the large woollen cloak with which the bishop covered him when giving up everything to his father Bernardone ; he had nothing more in the world. There is the alb of a deacon that is also our mother's work. Oh, if you knew the fineness and delicacy of that work ! What skill the saint must have had in needle-work. . . . Here is our mother's hair shirt, intertwined with knotted cords, which covered her whole body : you cannot hold it without pricking the fingers, or kiss it without hurting the lips. . . . And our mother's mantle is poor and heavy and coarse, and her inside tunic is all patched together so that the number of pieces could not

<sup>1</sup> Various relics of Francis had been buried in Clare's tomb.



be counted ! Oh, dearest sisters, what an eloquent lesson this exposition of relics was to us ! . . .

" Your affectionate sister and the least of your servants,  
 " SISTER MARIE TERESA of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
 unworthy abbess."

Amongst the answers was one from Merida, Venezuela, of which the following is part—

" O God, how have we merited this great good fortune ! The consolation to this small and poor community is indescribable. Oh, pray, pray for charity for this your unworthy sister who shares with you in the glory of being a daughter of so great a mother. Our convent has lasted two hundred years, and remains an island of peace amongst wars and calamities. A young sacristan from Corsica writes this letter in Italian for me.

" Your unworthy daughter flings herself at your feet.  
 " GIUSEPPA of the Virgin Mary, unworthy abbess."

The next extract is from the letter of the Abbess of Bézier : it is dated the 20th of August, 1851—nearly a year after the opening of the grave ! Truly time has no existence for the Poor Clare.

" What felicity for us all, what joy superb, to be the daughters of so great a saint, and to see in our day the sacred exposition of our glorious mother to public veneration. St. Clare was still alive when our monastery of Bézier was founded. It has several times been destroyed, but, thank God, has always arisen from its ruins."

The Poor Clares have re-clothed their holy mother—we give the official description of the body as now to be seen—

" The blessed remains are clothed in a nun's habit and cloak of silk velvet the colour of ashes ; the hands and feet are wrapped in silk net. A nun's white veil, and also a black one, encircle the head, and above the veils is a crown of brilliant silk flowers made in Paris ; over that,



again, a halo of gilt metal. The right hand is lying on the breast, and holds the book of the Rule : the left, somewhat extended, holds a beautiful silk lily ornamented with three brilliants on every stamen. There is an ebony cross with her little ivory crucifix on the breast. From a girdle of white silk hangs a rosary with a little silver crucifix. The whole skeleton lies on a bed of white silk, beautifully embroidered in gold, and the head, inclining a little to the right, rests on a pillow of the same material, also embroidered in gold. And under the pillow was placed a loving prayer to their holy mother from the nuns of Marseilles, Bastia and Nantes."

Till 1872 the body lay in St. George's Chapel, whilst a crypt and shrine were prepared. There was the interlude of the suppression of '66, but, thanks to the intervention of persons of importance, the nuns were then able to buy the convent, and they were, to their joy, able to give hospitality to the Benedictines of St. Apolinaris and the Clares of Cannara. But though they loved to thus repay the many benefits they had received from the Benedictines in days of old, the nuns could not but be sad that all their fields and vines were taken from them—they possess now only the convent and the garden its walls enclose.

The final translation of the body to the crypt in 1877 was another gorgeous ceremony, at which Leo XIII (then Cardinal Pecci) assisted. The Clares had dressed their beloved mother in a wonderful new habit and mantle, and covered the whole body with the finest net ; there now, in a crystal shrine, she lies exposed to view to those who visit Santa Chiara, and make appeal to the good sisters for the privilege.

There are only thirty-six Clares in that great grey old nunnery now, and they have the greatest difficulty in paying their way. They have to demand a small dowry from novices, and, alas ! they feel they cannot keep the seventh centenary with the ancient solemnity. To hear the abbess talk of the beauties of the cloister—the little



TOMB OF ST. CLARE.



enclosed gardens, the carvings, the long passages and open arches at the end with views right over the Umbrian plain—makes one long for permission to enter. The sisters wear the brown habit and go barefoot : in several books it is stated that the Poor Clares of Assisi wear grey—this is not so. Within those walls is buried a saintly Sister Francesca, on whose grave the roses bloom at Christmas, and the nuns keep the leaves and make a powder of them which has cured many people of fever. They follow the First Rule of St. Clare in all its purity.

Four years ago there came to Assisi from Paray-le-Monial in France a little colony of Clare-Colettines. At first they lived in a wretched house just within the walls, and suffered terribly from heat and cold—the rain coming in even on to their beds. Meanwhile they were building a new convent, and—O unæsthetic if ascetic nuns!—putting on new red tiles, instead of the old grey tiles of every other building in the town. In 1911 they moved into their convent. There are eight choir sisters and three lay sisters. The house is held in the name of a French gentleman, and all their alms come from France, as they are forbidden to beg in Assisi. They live chiefly on the produce of their garden, which they till themselves. They have three novices, of whom one is Italian, and they form a little refuge should their sisters at Paray-le-Monial be expelled.

The convent of Colpersito at SAN SEVERINO is supposed to be, after St. Damiano, the first foundation of the Poor Ladies. In the year 1212 it was already occupied by some nuns, probably Benedictines, and Francis went there to preach to them. Amongst the congregation was a young poet, William of Lisciano, known in Frederic's Court as the "King of Verses." Whilst Francis was preaching William saw his face transfigured, and his body blotted out by two shining swords—one extending from his head to his feet, the other across his shoulders, so forming a cross in the shape of a tau. The vision and



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the sermon won William from the court to the cloister; next morning he donned the brown robe and rope girdle, and was given the name of Brother Pacifico. So edified were the nuns by the vision and the conversion that they desired also to assume the brown robe and to come under the Franciscan rule.

It was to this convent that St. Francis, later on, took a lamb he had rescued from the market of Osimo, and begged the sisters to guard and care for it; and they took joy in their charge, and sheared the lamb and made of its wool a tunic, which they sent to St. Francis.

San Severino is about fifty miles east of Assisi in the March of Ancona, and is situate in a plain, but with a great castle-hill behind it. The Colpersito is now inhabited by Cappuccini, but the Clares have a convent up on the hill, and still consider themselves as of the first foundation.

On Monte Amiata in Tuscany is the picturesque convent of SANTAFIORA, which stands on one side of the little town, whilst on the other stands the castle of the Dukes of Sforza. It was founded in 1564 by Sister Marie Passitea Croci of Sienna, who came with two other sisters and gave the habit to eight young girls. It was built by the Duchess of Sforza, and has ever been under the care of that family. Sister Marie is famous as having also founded a monastery at Piombino and the one at Sienna for Clares of the First Rule. The influence of the Duchess of Sforza (*née* Stonor) saved the convent from suppression, and also saved for them a celebrated mineral spring to which the peasants of the Campagna come to drink when they have malaria. Speculators have often tried to get hold of this spring and make a business concern of it, but the good nuns say that the poor have ever been free to drink of it, and as long as they can it shall remain free. There is also an interesting old crucifix and a statue of the Virgin conserved in this convent. The nuns are but few now, but they still strictly retain their rule.

## NORCIA.

There used to be two convents of Clares at Norcia in Umbria, but in 1703 an earthquake shattered the monastery of St. Clare, and the sisters retired into the Monastery of Peace. We translate from the *Analecta Franciscana*—

*"Here follow the sisters who died with the reputation of sanctity in the Monastery of Peace at Norcia.*

"1. Sister Virginia Baozzi, born at Norcia, and professed in the Monastery of Peace of that same city. That she might serve her Spouse Christ faithfully she nourished the spiritual life which she had taken up with afflictions of the body and assiduous prayers. Content with brief sleep, she used to watch after Matins till the early morning in the choir, where she contemplated the Agony of Christ with lofty mind, and she was often found by the nuns in a state of ecstasy and of sublime illumination before the image of the crucifix, her mouth being pressed close to the side of the crucifix. Scorning earthly things, she used often to say with the Apostle: 'I long to be released and to be with Christ.' By the merits of her virginity God freed from a contraction of the hands Dorothea Baldeschi of Perugia, of the same institution, who prayed at her bier for the recovery of her health. Her soul flew forth to her Spouse on the 4th of December, 1598.

"2. Sister Clara Suazi of Norcia, who had taken the path of humility, always thought very humbly of herself, and cheerfully went about the more menial duties of the monastery. She could never be induced to undertake the office of abbess or vicaress. In order to cultivate utter poverty she used to wear a very old patched tunic. She bore the loss of her eyesight most patiently until her death. She passed away to the Lord on Easter Day 1600.

"3. Sister Eugenia Antonelli, born at Norcia of respectable parents, was admirable in character, and was distin-

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guished especially for her humility. Urged by the duty of obedience, she undertook the office of abbess. But to the provincial minister who laid this duty upon her she rejoined: 'Father, I do not wish this thing, but do it under obedience, and God will provide.' And so it fell out, for when a few months had elapsed she fell sick, and said to the confessor who was visiting her: 'Father, I shall go to Paradise on the Feast of the Holy Madonna.' The prediction came true, for she died the 2nd of February, 1675.

*"Two of the Sisters of the Monastery of St. Clare at Norcia.*

"1. Blessed Lucia, born at Valcatara near Norcia, although she passed into heaven before the monastery had been assigned to our people, yet, since she was the founder of it, we consider that her memory ought not to be omitted here. From her girlhood she was inclined to piety, and in order that she might serve God the better and provide for the better preservation of her virginity, which she had already vowed, she betook herself to the house dedicated to St. Jerome in Norcia. Shortly afterwards other virgins—Praxedes, Scholastica, Christiana, Jacoba, Catharine and Philippa—joined her, and she presided over them rather by example than by word. Meanwhile the illustrious one went to consult blessed Angela, who received her kindly, and consented to send one disciple herself to Norcia to instruct the said daughters in the regular discipline. But as the number of virgins constantly increased she enlarged the house into a monastery and caused a new church to be erected, dedicated to the divine Mother Clare. She likewise built another in her own land, and, having obtained canonical sanction, she governed each most holily. Full of merits and virtue, she joined her heavenly Spouse on the 12th of February, 1430, and was distinguished by miracles both before and after her death.

"2. Sister Maria-Antonia Cestarelli from her girlhood subdued her flesh with fastings and scourgings. One







ST. COSIMATO, ROME.

night, when she was praying very fervently before the image of the Virgin, she burned with desire to consult her confessor, who lived seven miles away at Norcia. Leaving her house thereupon, she found a very beautiful youth, who accompanied her on her way there and back by night, though her parents knew nothing of what had taken place. She entered the monastery of St. Clare, and, having taken her vows, she set a pattern to all by her patience, poverty and spiritual fervour, wherefore she earned the favour of the vision of her heavenly Spouse. She passed away to the stars the 19th of May, 1659."

There were others famed for sanctity, but not mentioned here.

#### ROME.

*"Oh name, of the world's names—Rome!"*

In September 1234 St. Clare, at the invitation of Pope Gregory (formerly Cardinal Ugolino), sent four Poor Ladies to the old Benedictine monastery of SAN COSIMATO. It was the first monastery in Rome in which nuns were strictly enclosed, and its severe rule drew numbers of the noblest families, such as the Colonna, Orsini, Farnese and others. It was for this convent that Penturicchio painted a beautiful fresco of the Virgin and Child with St. Francis and St. Clare, which is now in the Vatican.

In 1451 this convent was reformed by the Venerable Marguerite de Sulmone; amongst five religious who came from St. Lucy at Foligno to aid the reform was the saintly Theodora de Molara.

Pope Sixtus rebuilt this convent for the nuns in 1475.

In 1517 Leo X sent fourteen nuns from San Cosimato to revive the strict observance at SAN LORENZO on the Viminal Hill—a convent which had likewise once belonged to the Benedictines and been handed over to the Clares in the lifetime of the saint. Amongst these nuns was Sister

Violante Savelli, a Roman princess, who lived to the great age of a hundred years, and retained all her faculties to the last, and never missed the midnight office.

For hundreds of years at St. Cosimato in Trastevere the Clares lived on in their old convent, being sometimes prosperous and sometimes declining, till early in this century a blow long feared fell on them—the Government sent word that they were too few to be any longer permitted the use of that big building; they must turn out in favour of some charitable institution. It was a bitter blow. A temporary house was found in the Via St. Gregorio, and there the nuns are at this time.

We went to visit them in December 1911, and found them cheerful, in spite of their exile from their old home. They were twenty-one in number, and had that very day received a new novice. They proposed to celebrate the centenary by increasing strictness of rule—they are at present Urbanists. It was obvious they had hopes of winning back their old home. They had a roll of abbesses, but the book was too precious to allow us to copy from it.

We next went to visit St. Cosimato, and were allowed to see the cloister, where a number of old men were sunning themselves; if the nuns had to turn out, it was well at least that the poor old men could enjoy the peace and quiet of the convent. They did not look in the least out of place. The former convent of Poor Clares at Cutigliano in the Apennines, which was confiscated in 1866, is now used as a holiday home for Florentine children, and those who have seen the wee mites enjoying the old garden and getting health from the mountain air must rejoice that, if the convent had to be lost, it also should be used for a good purpose. Our illustration is of the entrance to the old church of St. Cosmo and St. Damian, which served as the sisters' choir. It has beautiful mosaics, and is well worth a visit, though not often included in the tourist's round.

The convent of St. Lorenzo in Panisperna prospered

for a time. It was there that St. Bridget of Sweden died in 1372, and there her body remained till she was canonized by Boniface IX, when Queen Catherine claimed it and carried it off to Sweden.

From St. Lorenzo was founded a monastery at Genoa by Mother Catherine Negroni and four sisters in 1397.

But the chief foundations from San Lorenzo were made in 1618 by Sister Isabella and the Venerable Francesca Farnese. These two Roman nobles, sisters in the world as well as in religion, founded three very strict convents at Farnese, Albano, and the Conception at Rome. They also reformed the convent at Palestrina known as St. Mary of the Angels. So strict was the life they inaugurated in these houses that the nuns were known as the *Sepolto vive*, or buried alive. That the reform did not spread very widely is probably due to the over-strictness of the rule.

In 1875 two sisters from St. Lorenzo went over to the United States and founded several convents: their story is told in another chapter. It is a great glory to the dwindling nuns in Rome that their foundations are flourishing so exceedingly in the New World. Strange indeed is the contrast between the old convents of Italy and the new convents of America. But the spirit of the Clares is the same, the life is the same, the result is the same. St. Lorenzo is to-day a chemical laboratory, for the nuns have been expelled, and now occupy a little convent known as St. Lucy in Selci.

These nuns also have the Urbanist rules, and suffer their exile as cheerfully as their sisters in the Via Gregorio. We went to see the old convent, and felt it was much more unsuitably used than that of San Cosimato. It seemed sad indeed in Rome itself to find the Poor Clares mere exiles—merely on sufferance.

There is a third convent in the Via Sforza, of later foundation and stricter rule; and these three are all we could trace in the great centre of Catholicism to-day. It



is interesting to the English-speaking Catholics who attend St. Silvestro in Capite to remember that it was founded by the Blessed Margaret Colonna in the thirteenth century as a convent of Poor Clares, and that the Blessed Margaret died there in 1284. These Clares took the Longchamps rule, and called themselves Minoresses; they refused to come under the rule of Urban IV, and therefore Boniface VIII, who stood no nonsense, excommunicated them all. His successor, Benedict XI, removed the ban and allowed them the primitive rule.

#### NAPLES.

This beautiful town is of special note in the history of the Poor Clares for two things: the building of the huge Royal Monastery by Robert of Anjou and Queen Sancha in 1309; and the founding of the first monastery of the Capuchin reform by Mary Laurentia Longa in 1538. The Royal Monastery was built to hold three hundred religious following the modified rule of Innocent IV, with an adjoining house to hold fifty of the strict rule to say the Divine Office. The chapel served as the royal mausoleum. There was one good point about this huge structure with its special privileges: that it has been able to shelter four other communities of Clares who have been expelled from their convents. In 1656 the entire community died of the plague. In 1895 Mgr. Ricard says there were only eight choir sisters and seven externs left, and that professions were forbidden by the Government.

Queen Sancha founded other convents of Clares in France and Italy; she also urged and aided her husband to buy certain sanctuaries in the Holy Land and give them to the Franciscan friars. When she was left a widow, Queen Sancha determined to join the Poor Clares—but the right spirit was in her, and she would not enter the Royal Monastery at Naples, or any other of the big

foundations she had made. She built yet another Neapolitan convent, a small one, called the Holy Cross, and she got some sisters of the First Rule to come from Assisi to start it—and there she retired, giving up a diadem of gems for a crown of thorns. She only lived for one year in seraphic poverty—her death came in 1345, and the people of Naples ever speak of her as the Blessed Sancha.

The Ven. Mary Laurentia Longa was born in Spain and married a Neapolitan; by the intervention of Our Lady of Loretto she was saved from poison administered by an unfaithful servant, and she vowed her rescued life to the glory of God. She built a hospital for incurables at Naples—a house for the Theatines—a house for the Capucines—she entered the Third Order—but she was not satisfied: she had not yet found the peace of God. Then she asked those of the Third Order with whom she lived to adopt the Clare-Colettine rule, with certain added severities, and to place themselves under the Capuchin fathers. They agreed—and at last the Ven. Mary Laurentia found satisfaction. The others found it also, and vocations became numerous: the reform spread to Rome in 1572: St. Charles Borromeo introduced it into Milan; it spread to Recanati, Barcelona, Paris and Marseilles. Mother Mary Laurentia Longa died in 1542, and the reform was formally ratified by Clement VIII in 1600. To this branch of the Clares belong St. Veronica Juliana and the Blessed Mary Magdalene Martinengo.

#### VERONA.

In 1226 Cardinal Ugolino obtained a piece of ground at Verona on the Champs de Mars to build a convent of Poor Clares, and St. Agnes went from Florence with some of her religious to found the new house. When the suppression of 1810 came the nuns had to leave, after more than five hundred years of quiet; they retired to another

house and formed a school. But in 1836 Thérèse Cavalieri recovered the old monastery for the Clares, and restored it : in 1845 there was formal enclosure, and the foundress (in religion Mother Maria Cherubina) was elected abbess. Under her zealous and able guidance the monastery returned to all its old glory, and in 1848 we find Laura Cesari making profession with the name of Sister M. Francis of the Sacred Stigmata. Unfortunately, in 1860 Perpetual Adoration was granted to the convent of St. Clare in the same town, and it was put under the charge of the old sisters, and to keep the two houses going became a great strain. It seems doubtful to us if Perpetual Adoration is compatible with the strict rule of St. Clare ; it is therefore interesting to notice those convents where it is attempted.

#### GENEVA.

The Poor Clare-Colettines were established at Geneva in 1477 by Yolande, Duchess of Savoy. The first members came from Orbe, Seurre, Chambéry and Vevey. For about fifty years they lived in peace ; then in 1532 the Genevan Council of Two Hundred ordained that in every church and cloister of the city "the pure Gospel" should be preached. The bishop strongly opposed this decree, but it drew to the city a medley of preachers, amongst whom was the notorious Farel, one of the most obnoxious members of the Lutheran reform. Even Erasmus had joined in expelling this man from Basle because of his violence ; and he had been expelled from other towns. It is said that when he preached at Metz the bells were rung to drown his voice, but he howled down the bells. Imagine the Poor Clares, who are trained to speak as little as possible and in a low voice, obliged to listen to such a man ! On the 6th of July, 1535, he preached a shameful discourse on "Marriage," and bade them ignore their vow of chastity : rising to their feet, the religious made for the



door, but found it shut in their faces—for six hours they were kept in the choir and heckled by the heretics, who wanted to find out which of the nuns wished to leave the cloister and make an honourable marriage. None of them consented at that date, but, alas! later on a certain Sister Blasine forsook them. On the 24th of August fifty men, armed with hatchets, hammers, etc., attacked the convent and forced an entrance and expelled the sisters: we regret to say, on the authority of a Poor Clare, Jeanne de Jussie, who wrote an account of the affair, that when her married sister, seeking Blasine, asked of a novice, "Are you my sister?" the novice replied, "No, I am not the sister of a *Diablesse*." We rather fancy, from the unction with which the tale is told, that it was Jeanne herself who made the retort. Also—for we would tell the whole truth—when the intruders laid hold of Blasine to take her away, two old nuns, her aunts, held on to the unfortunate girl, who must have suffered considerably in the struggle. The other nuns fled to Annecy—that charming little town high up to the south—and there they formed the Monastery of the Cross. Of all their trials there is not time to tell (for they were only one of many communities on whom calamity had fallen), but Jeanne de Jussie especially notes that the old nuns (one ninety-five years of age) felt the cruelty of the flight terribly. To Annecy came also some of the nuns expelled from Vevey and other towns, and in that sombre convent above that little arched street they lived to hallow Annecy till the coming of St. Francis de Sales. But to-day the convent is used as a cotton factory, though the street still retains the name of St. Clare, as does the massive old town gate at its end.

#### AMIENS.

The foundation of Amiens by St. Colette is referred to in Chap. VII, but its later history is of interest, as it has ever been the training-ground for English Clares.



When the first abbess, Isabel of Bourbon, died, her niece, Catherine de la Marche, was elected in her stead. In 1615 the convent adopted the constitutions of the Capuchin reform. In 1625 Marie de Medicis of France and Marie Henrietta of England availed themselves of the royal privilege of entering the enclosure of this convent and visited every part, and left behind them a reliquary as a remembrance of the occasion. It will be remembered that the late Queen Victoria once availed herself of the royal privilege to enter the enclosure of the Great St. Bernard when she was crossing the Alps. In the year 1773 Perpetual Adoration was commenced, at the earnest entreaty of the nuns. In 1789 began the vexations of the Revolution and the dogged resistance of the religious, led by their abbess, Mother St. Hugues. First they were asked for a return of their revenues, and replied they had none, they lived on daily alms. Then they were commanded to appoint a more pacific abbess; the answer was to re-elect Mother St. Hugues. Thereupon Mother St. Hugues was exiled, and went to America; the gates of the monastery were forced open by men, and the nuns were told that they were "set at liberty"—as they refused to leave they were expelled by force. For some time they lived secretly with friends, wearing secular dress; but in 1793 the upholders of Liberty seized them and imprisoned them. Oh, human perversity! Throughout all their trials they preserved the notorious cheerfulness of Poor Clares, and it is told that one day, when their jailer grimly informed them of the approach of Lebon, who had just sentenced all the prisoners of Arras to the guillotine, a Sister S. Joseph exclaimed with a transport she could not hide: "My God! what joy! We shall all go to Paradise!" But they were not granted martyrdom, and after the death of Robespierre they were released, and in 1801 Mother St. Hugues dared to return from America, and they returned to their despoiled convent under their old abbess. A few years later a new convent was begun,

and when that was finished the pious people of Amiens built them a suitable church. Here, in 1827, they once more commenced Perpetual Adoration. They were now able to receive novices and to live according to their old rule. So far they have escaped the recent suppression laws in France, but they have to live very quietly, and desire that no attention be called to their presence.

#### AVIGNON.

This convent was founded in 1250 by Sister Maria of Assisi, who became first abbess. Whilst Gerarde de Sabran was abbess here her little niece, Roseline de Villeneuve, was entered as an oblate at the age of ten years; she became a Carmelite, and is now St. Roseline. There were two foundations from Avignon, at Annonay and Sisteron.

In 1507, the monastery having become somewhat lax, Sœur Marie de Clermont from Albi was sent as abbess to reform it, and for thirty-four years she ruled with skill, so that the old fame of the convent was quite revived. Years after her death her body was found quite uncorrupt, and she is of saintly memory. After she passed away the convent gradually declined, and if ever Avignon is to be restored to the list of foundations, it will be because of the fame of Marie de Clermont.

#### LILLE.

The Poor Clare-Colettines of Lille were founded in 1490 by Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. It was here, in 1783, that several of the Bruges sisters took refuge during the brief reign of Joseph II; but only a few years later, at the French Revolution, the nuns of Lille had to seek shelter in their turn in Bruges. It was at Lille that

Mother Jacqueline de la Vallée was elected abbess for her saintly qualities, but insisted on resigning because she could not write, and felt she therefore could not fulfil the office for the best. This shows the democracy of the Clare cloisters, where there are no lay sisters and all have to share the manual duties and are all equal. It was not till 1866 that the convent again came into being, owing to the energy of Mother Mary Dominic of Bruges and the generosity of the Count de Caulaincourt. Mother Mary Pacifica Vanhoutte was the abbess of this re-establishment, and for thirty-four years at Lille the convent of the Holy Trinity flourished under her sweet and able rule. She died after great suffering in the year 1900, leaving a saintly memory behind her. Alas! Lille was shortly after to be one of the convents closed by the Government, and at the present time the town is without a temple of prayer. Doubtless the future will see the nuns return to their own again.

### LYONS.

About 1269 Blanche de Chalons established the Poor Clares at Lyons, the foundresses probably coming from Rheims—which had been founded by Marie de Braye in 1220. The site where the Lyons convent was built was known as "the desert," because it was so isolated, and the convent became known locally as the "Monastère des Clarisses de la Déserte." The Bishop had refused to allow a begging community in his diocese, so the rule of poverty had to be relaxed, and these Clares were allowed possessions. This monastery placed outside the walls in troublous times was frequently taken and pillaged, and the nuns put to flight. In 1501 the twenty-fourth abbess of the Monastery of the Desert asked permission of the Pope to adopt the Benedictine rule, as the rule of St. Clare in its purity—and strength—was not kept in their



monastery. Her request was granted, and these Clares became Benedictines. In 1484 the Colettian reform had been introduced at Bourg, but in the wars between France and Savoy in the end of the next century this unfortunate town found itself considerably battered and despoiled, and famine, as usual, followed on war. The nuns were starving—they had nothing to eat but a few cabbages and herbs. The Provincial sent them a letter saying that those who liked to leave the monastery might come to Lyons—and he would provide for them. Seven accepted the offer—eight remained at Bourg, and their faith was justified, and their monastery resumed its pristine splendour at the swift end to the war. The seven others arrived safely at Lyons after a three days' walk under the guidance of one of the extern sisters, and here the Benedictines housed them in their sumptuous Abbey Royal of St. Peter. "The Poor Clares were happy in that house so royally hospitable, but they sighed ardently for the blessed moment when the Lord would grant them some little corner in the town where they could again find that poverty and total separation from the world—that sweet peace and solitude—of which they had been so long deprived." The longing was fulfilled—an Italian came forward and offered a small house, and then the great of the land—Marie de Medicis and Anne of Austria and others—interested themselves in building a convent for these Poor Clares. And it flourished exceedingly, till the Revolution for a time arrested all temporal progress. Then the nuns showed their courage: they were thrown into prison; they were condemned to death—but reprieved. Their intrepidity roused the admiration of all, and at last they were released and led in triumph to their old home. There they lived till 1806, and then a benefactor bought them a piece of the Convent of the Visitation, where St. Francis de Sales had died: this, much augmented and altered, is their convent of to-day in the Rue Sala. In 1870 fears came to them there, and the Communards



insisted on searching the convent for arms. "We have no arms, but we have a whole regiment of cavalry!" said one sister, and she threw open a cupboard door and displayed a lot of tiny horses that the sisters used to make to give to the children of the benefactors who gave alms. The soldiers laughed heartily—one begged a horse for his child; another requested one of the little cotton-wool lambs for his sick daughter.

"Take what you will," said the mother abbess; "we should like to give you medals also, to protect you in battle, if we dared."

"Oh, give them, give them, Reverend Mother! We accept them with gratitude!"

The soldiers left—but they were no longer the same men: in place of menaces and threats they were all smiles and thanks and promises of help. And they kept their promises—not only in guarding the convent, but in bringing gifts of provisions.

In 1876 these sisters founded the convent of Lourdes—as is told elsewhere.

Last, but not least, under their late Mother Abbess Angela, the Poor Clares of Lyons produced the monumental but fragmentary *Histoire Abrégée de l'Ordre de St. Claire d'Assisi* in two big volumes. It was published in 1906, and from its interesting pages some of the most charming of our stories have been culled. The Mother Angela died a few months after its publication, and the present abbess is Mother Marie de Gonzaga. The Clares live under the menace of expulsion; and in the autumn of 1911 heard with horror the riot which occurred at the expulsion of the beloved Little Sisters of the Assumption. The people of Lyons are very loyal, and it is doubtful what would occur if the Poor Clares, who are so much respected, were turned out of their home.

It was Rosary Sunday 1911 when I visited the Poor Clares at LOURDES. From all the country round the people were flocking in to join the pilgrims in residence, and the

Rosary Church and the Grotto of the Rosary Square and the Basilica were all crowded. Down the streets from the station poured the peasants with their baskets, and the *brancardier* pulling the invalid-chairs. Against this stream I made slow headway till I reached the old bridge, and found on my left a long grey stone building with very little windows, and with dark trees shrouding its narrow strip of garden.

Inside the doorway a sudden silence seemed to fall; to the left was the chapel, where two sisters and a few peasants watched before the Host; to the right was the little parlour where at the rota I was to have speech, I hoped, with the Rev. Mother.

But no—when that strange, toneless voice from behind the wooden wall with its narrow slits reached me, it was to say that Mother Marie des Anges was ill: "She is now sixty-eight years of age, and cannot go upstairs without assistance; she begs Madame to excuse her, and I am to give all the information I can."

"But Rev. Mother is one of the *miraculées* of Lourdes, is she not? I wanted to hear about her cure."

"Ah, that was in 1878—long ago. Mother Abbess was then a sister at Lyons, and very ill—so ill the slightest movement gave her pain. She arrived here nearly dead, and was carried to the grotto. You must not think she was praying for a cure; she was merely submitting her will to the will of God, whilst hoping she would soon be with Him in Paradise. But the Bishop told her she must desire to recover for the glory of Our Lady, and immediately she was cured and got up and walked. She came straight here—and has been here ever since."

"And when did she become abbess?"

"In the year 1889. Our foundress and first abbess was Mother Marie Thérèse de Jesus, then abbess at Lyons, who came here in 1876 with three sisters and two novices. This convent was built for us on this waste and rocky bit of ground by the river. We were quite alone then, but

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now the hotels press round us on every side. Lourdes has changed so very, very much."

"And how many nuns are there here now?"

"We are seventeen professed, two novices and one postulant, madame; we were more numerous at one time, but in 1902 we sent five of our sisters to Canada to form a new foundation there."

"And you keep your enclosure strictly here?—you do not go to the grotto?—even if you are sick?"

"Ah, no; there are some of us who have never even seen the grotto. But we hear the pilgrims singing the 'Avé, Avé' sometimes, and we pray always for their sick, and for cures of both body and soul; and we render thanks to the Immaculate Virgin for all her favours. And we pray for England, madame; there are many, many conversions there, are there not? England will return to the faith?"

It was the only human touch in that monotonous voice from behind the heavy shutter. In Huysman's *Les Foules de Lourdes* he speaks of the "gay laugh" of a Poor Clare at this convent. I heard it not. I was glad to be directed to the *Journal de la Grotte* for a description of the departure of the sisters for Canada, and then to say "Adieu," and depart from that cold loneliness out into the sunshine and the crowds. I doubt not the patient nun would have gone on replying to questions; but mere information can be gained from chronicles, and I had got my impression of that grey island of sober prayer amidst the seething shouts of pilgrims who storm the gates of heaven with wild entreaties and clamorous petitions. Nowhere else have I so keenly felt the contrast between the active and the contemplative life in religion. That whole town, with its thousands and thousands of pilgrims, its great hotels and greater hospices, its crowds of priests and nuns serving its crowds of sick—the priests with the leather braces of the *brancardiers* over their soutanes, and busy carrying stretchers and wheeling



chairs ; the nuns with white aprons and sleeves over their habits running with water to the sick ; the Capuchin father in the square, who, with arms extended and throat of brass, leads the pathetic invocations—

“ Sauvez-nous, Jésus, nous périssons !  
Seigneur, faites que je voie !  
Seigneur, faites que je marche ! ”

The endless processions, and services, and hymns, and noise, and prayers ; the cosmopolitan crowd ; the thousand tongues.

And in the midst of this seething shouting Lourdes, that tiny island of silent prayer and secluded lives.

Of the cures wrought by the prayers of these Poor Clares there are many tales. Mother Mary Seraphim, abbess at Valence, was tormented by a grievous malady for many years ; special prayers for her recovery were offered up at Lourdes ; she suddenly felt an assuaging hand which soothed away all suffering. Astonished, dismayed, she hastened to the chapel and threw herself at the feet of Our Lady, and cried : “ Oh, why, dear Mother, do you no longer allow me to suffer ? Ah ! I do not wish it to be thus ! ” Her sufferings returned, and only ceased with her death in 1903.

They persevere, even in their pains, these Poor Clares.

#### BRUGES.

At some unknown date in the thirteenth century a young German maiden named Ermentrude, moved by a vision, went forth from Cologne, with only one companion, in search of that religious life to which she felt called. Day by day she moved on, guided by the Holy Spirit and begging her way, till at last she arrived in Bruges, and was sheltered by some Franciscan tertiaries.

One day the voice spake plainly to her : “ Take the Virgin of Assisi as your model.” With prompt obedience



she wrote to St. Clare for her rule, and gathered around her those who were thirsting for the sheltered life. In time the answer came—a letter which is very beautiful and very old. Some have cast doubts on its authenticity, but to us it seems to bear plainly the mark of St. Clare—

“To her dearest Sister Ermentrude, Clare of Assisi, humble servant of Jesus Christ, health and peace.

“We have of late been informed, dearest sister, how that, by the grace of our Lord, thou hast renounced the world, and greatly have we rejoiced therein, marvelling at thy noble resolution and thy inimitable fervour in running the race of perfection with thy worthy companions. I pray thee to be faithful unto death to the Divine Spouse to whom thou hast dedicated thyself, and I am fully confident that thou shalt receive the crown of immortality as a reward of these thy labours. The season of affliction is short, but the time of reward is eternal. Be not confounded by the magnificence of this world—it passeth away like a shadow; be not deceived by its pomps, for they are but mockeries and deceptions. The dragon of hell will prowl around thee, and terribly will he hiss; but pay no heed, withstand him valiantly, and he will take to flight. Take heed, my beloved, and be not cast down by tribulations; in the midst of prosperity let not thy heart be puffed up with pride, for the quality of faith should enable us to be humble in the midst of good fortune, unmoved when overtaken by adversity. Render unto God the service which thou hast vowed unto Him, see that thou render it diligently and at the appointed time, for be thou well assured that He will richly reward thee for thy sacrifices unto Him. Lift up thine eyes oftentimes unto the heavens, which bid thee to take up the cross and to follow Christ, who has gone this way before thee; for it is written that only by passing through many tribulations shalt thou gain the kingdom of heaven. Above all things, see that thou adore with all thy soul and with all thy

strength our Sovereign God and His Divine Son, who yielded Himself up to be crucified for our sins. Oh, the thought of God! Never should thy mind be lacking this profitable thought! Meditate continually upon the mysteries of Christ's Passion, and on the sorrows of His most holy Mother by the cross. Let action be united to ardent and continual prayer. Be thou ever watchful and intent, striving with perseverance to finish the good work thou hast begun so well. Perform all the duties of thy office with humility, and live thou in absolute poverty. Let not fear stay thee from the completion of thy work, for, my beloved daughter, the Lord is ever faithful to His word and holy in His works, and He will pour down upon thee and thy nuns an abundance of blessings. He will be unto thee a Shield and Consolation, thy Redeemer and thy Everlasting Reward. Until the coming of that good time let us pray one for the other, and, upheld by the sweet bond of charity, we shall readily obey the laws of Christ Jesus."

The office to which St. Clare refers is that of abbess, which Ermentrude now undertook. After the death of Clare she visited Rome and obtained powers to found other monasteries in Bruges and round about, and through her the Order spread over Flanders and the north of France.

Therefore it was that when Mother Catherine de Longueville, in whose arms St. Colette had died, came from Ghent with seven sisters and was joined by others from Arras, the people of Bruges—knowing well the sweet sisters of St. Clare—set all the bells a-ringing, and the Archduke and princes of all sorts went out to welcome them. This was in 1478, and this little band introduced the stricter constitutions of St. Colette on to the first rule, which had so far been followed in Bruges.

Before a hundred years were over the convent was besieged during the wars of the Gueux. Entering the courtyard, the soldiers bade the nuns come forth before

they set fire to the building. The abbess took her processional cross and gave the nuns their tapers.

"Procedamus in pace," she said, and opened the cloister door, and with downcast eyes and veiled face stepped forth. Her nuns all followed in silence and order.

The soldiers fell back; the captain felt tears in his eyes; these modest poor women in their patched habits and bare feet—oh! who could wrong them?

"Return to your solitude," he cried, "and live in peace: no ill shall touch you;" and he and his men constituted themselves their protectors, and the nuns were safe for that time.

One of the burgomasters who had a daughter a novice in the convent became frightened, and insisted on entering the enclosure to force his daughter to return home. She seized a black veil and threw it over her head, and hid herself amongst the professed. In vain the irate father scanned the faces—he could not recognize his own daughter! At last he seized a nun by the arm and began to drag her along. "Sir, I am not your daughter," was the quiet remonstrance, "and I should indeed be sorry to have such a father!" Baffled and ashamed, the man withdrew, and his daughter lived to become abbess, and died in the odour of sanctity.

In 1783 Joseph II, Emperor of Austria, suppressed the convent, and the nuns fled by twos and threes, some being sheltered in France by that saintly Carmelite, Madame Louise. In 1791 these sisters were permitted to return—not one was missing! From far and near they gathered, their convent was repaired, and under the same abbess—Mother Willaert—they returned to their prayers.

In 1796 the convent was again suppressed, and the nuns took refuge in a house in the town. Here they received no less than fourteen novices, and were able, in 1814, to send some young sisters to help the two sole remaining



MODERN KITCHEN (BULLINGHAM)





nuns at Ghent to build up a new community. For many years they fought on against popular prejudice and against great poverty. They had the offer of a new convent, and tried to soothe public criticism by adding to it a little school to be managed by extern sisters.

Now it was that Mary Dominic, in the world Julie Berlamont, came on the scene, at first as a fervent novice, then as secretary to the abbess and mistress of novices, and finally as abbess herself. This was in 1831, when she was only thirty-two years of age; the rule is that the abbess should be, if possible, forty years of age: so it is evident that there were special powers patent in Mother Mary Dominic that led to her election. She is celebrated for the number of foundations—fourteen—which she established, nine in Belgium, and four in England, and one in France—and this though the Bruges nuns did not get into their rebuilt convent till 1841. The convents in Belgium were: Anvers, 1834; Tournay, 1837; Lierre and Louvain, 1838; Ypres, 1840; Courtrai, 1842; Brussels, 1843; Beaumont, 1854; and Ostend, 1862. All these convents still flourish, but that of Lille in France was closed by the Government a few years ago. This excellent abbess died in 1871, and was succeeded by Mother Mary Bernardine, who made a foundation at Newport, and resuscitated the old Gravelines convent where so many English Clares had lived in the past.

When in Bruges, in 1911, we turned in at the old arched gateway of the Poor Clares' convent and rang their great bell. We had no desire to disturb the abbess—Mother M. Josephine—and merely asked the extern sister to let us see the chapel. She was a most friendly little sister, and led us along the clean stone passage to the bare chapel with its stone floor and few wooden seats. There was a total absence of all merely decorative ornament, and the presence instead of real memorials of Francis and Clare. A still older sister came and spoke to us and made us welcome, and gave us a Litany of St. Clare. Having said

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our little prayer we went silently away, much edified by the unmistakable atmosphere of sincerity and devotion and the simple charm of the place.

### SPAIN.

The Order was first founded in Spain in 1229 by Agnes and Clare of Assisi, niece and great-niece of the saint. They landed at BARCELONA and founded a convent there, and subsequently made foundations at Zamorra and Burgos. Agnes was the first abbess, and when she died Clare was elected in her place. The shrine of these two pioneers is still honoured in Barcelona.

The Poor Clares of GANDIA are celebrated for connection with both St. Francis Xavier and St. Francis de Borgia. One of their earliest abbesses was Mother Madeleine Xavier, the eldest sister of the saint; hearing that her father proposed to withdraw her brother from his theological studies, she begged him to desist, for it had been foreshown to her that he would become the apostle of the Indies and a great preacher of the Gospel.

John Borgia, the second Duke of Gandia, married Donna Maria Henriquez, and had two children, John and Isabel. John married and had several children, of whom one afterwards became St. Francis de Borgia. Isabel entered the Poor Clares at an early age—it is said that, having been refused because of her youthfulness, one day, when the door was open to admit the Holy Viaticum, she ran in and refused to leave. When Maria Henriquez became a widow she also entered the convent and humbly submitted to her daughter, who was by then abbess. The doctors had told the Duchess, who was no longer young, and who was not strong, that she could not survive the austerities of the cloister a year; nevertheless she lived thirty-three years, and had a *Te Deum* sung at the end of them. St. Francis used afterwards to say that

from the time he saw his grandmother die his soul was always strong and devoted to the religious life. In the laxness of those days the boy Francis was constantly at the convent, and when only five years old the nuns put him up on a chair and he preached his first sermon.

In 1523 the Duke of Gandia sent his three little daughters, sisters of St. Francis, into the convent of Poor Clares; they were only eleven, six and two years of age. Two daughters by his second marriage were also sent in when eleven and eight years old; two little cousins, aged seven and ten, were also entered. So that in 1569 we find *Sœur Marie de la Croix* writing to Francis Borgia, who was then General of the Jesuits: "The children are well. Their characters are charming; so sweet and docile. They entirely forget their fathers and their brothers. They are never naughty, and so far they give no trouble to those who have charge of them." One of the children writes to her father: "I learn grammar and how to write, because I am going to be school-mistress. Madeline is going to be a religious; she is only two years and five months, but I am already big: I am seven years old and getting on for eight." Be it understood there was no school connected with the convent, but that before the Council of Trent it was not unusual to have these *oblates*, as they were called, sent in at an early age to train for the cloister.

The Royal Monastery of Poor Clares at MADRID was founded by the Princess Jeanne, whose sister had married the Emperor of Austria. In 1576 the Emperor died, and his widow, the Empress Marie, felt a great longing to return to her native country and hide herself in the convent of Poor Clares. Her daughter Margaret, aged seventeen, asked to be allowed to go with her. Together they set off for Spain, but when they arrived there they found that the King, Philip II, had formed a wish, for political reasons, to marry his niece Margaret—such marriages are allowable on the Continent in certain cases. Margaret



was in despair. "The crown of Spain is for me a poor ambition beside my desire to be a spouse of Christ!" she cried. Her confessor interfered in her aid, and she entered the convent of Madrid as a novice. But, alas! rank has its trials: her family were always procuring dispensations to visit her, and trying to remove her from the convent, either for marriage or, at one time, to make her abbess of the convent at Vienna. At last, however, she won her wish and was professed. All the different labours of the house were laid upon her as tests: she had to take her turn in the kitchen and the infirmary. Her humility was so great she rejoiced in these trials, and, having come through them successfully, she was made mistress of novices and then abbess. Her niece, daughter of the Duke of Modena, joined her in the cloister. In this convent they also venerated the name of Sister Antonia of Jesus, who, entering at the late age of forty, for thirty years kept the gate, and never repeated any worldly news she heard. Several foundations were made from this Royal Monastery in Spain, Portugal and South America.

To Father Joseph of Madrid, confessor to the Poor Clares, we owe an old Latin *Vita S. Matris Claræ*, which is of great interest.

TOLEDO deserves mention, because there Beatrice de Silva in 1489 founded the Conceptionists, which Order Father Francis Ximénès after allied to the Clares. They wear a white habit and blue cloak in honour of the Holy Virgin, and also a Franciscan cord. They have the same cardinal protector as the Clares.

To Toledo also belongs Sister Jeanne of the Cross, who is historically interesting as a great preacher. She is said to have preached seventy sermons in a year, some of them lasting two or three hours. People travelled miles to hear her, and Cardinal Ximénès and the Emperor Charles were amongst her audience. Though often spoken of as a Poor Clare, she was really a tertiary; she, however, kept, together with her sisters, a strict rule, and she was always

submissive to Holy Church. In spite of suspicions she managed to impress all who heard her with her sincerity and sanctity.

From SALAMANCA the first foundations in Mexico were made, the Poor Clares sailing in the same ship with Fernandez Cortez. Salamanca had embraced the Colettine reform as early as 1439.

Many of the Spanish convents were very rich and cumbered with many worldly possessions. VALENCIA, for instance, had a lot of Moorish slaves, who were recommended to the nuns by the Pope as souls to be converted and saved.

The monastery at SEVILLE is chiefly famous through its abbess, Elenora Gusman, who, at the early age of twelve, gave up the world and all it offered, of her own free will, to hide in a cloister. For sixty-nine years she lived the religious life, an example of all the quiet virtues, and deeply beloved by her sisters; for forty of these years she acted as abbess. She died in 1589, and many years after her body was found intact, and was removed to a tomb within the nuns' choir.

#### LISBON.

Poor Portugal has no Clares just now—but, nevertheless, the convent at Lisbon must have a notice, if for nothing else than because it was founded by the great Franciscan historian Mark of Lisbon, Bishop of Oporto, in 1562. The Ven. Beatrice was first abbess, and during her time some of the English Clares from the Low Countries found refuge there.

There are two Clares specially distinguished for sanctity in the chronicles of Lisbon: Sister Constance of Jesus and Sister Mary of the Assumption. Constance of Jesus was one of eight sisters who all entered the Lisbon convent; for her humility and intelligence she was early elected

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abbess, and was re-elected on three occasions. Her zeal for mortification was so great that she used to command her sisters to flagellate her. She died in 1635 in the odour of sanctity. Mary of the Assumption ran away from home and entered the Poor Clares, having heard a heavenly voice declare : "Who seeks God shall find Him." She was early made mistress of novices and then abbess—to the latter office she was twice re-elected. She died in 1653, aged sixty.

The Poor Clare convent at COIMBRA in Portugal was founded by St. Elizabeth, Queen of that country, and was a huge and royal building. She had intended to enter as a Poor Clare, but reasons of State made that impossible, so she joined the Third Order, and had the privilege of being buried in the habit of the Second Order in 1336.

## CHAPTER XIII

### POESY AND POVERTY

JACOPONE DA TODI, author of the noblest poem that has ever been written—the “Stabat Mater”—wrote a homely Italian *lauda* to Santa Chiara. He probably never saw St. Clare, for she was dead before his dramatic conversion in 1267. Matthew Arnold has told the story, how Jacopone

“ In his light youth amid a festal throng  
Sate with his bride to see a public show.  
Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow  
Youth like a star, and what to youth belong—  
Gay raiment, sparkling gauda, elation strong.  
A prop gave way ! crash fell a platform ! lo,  
Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay.  
Shuddering they drew her garments off—and found  
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth white skin.”

The husband never got over the shock of his loss ; and the knowledge of his wife's secret austerities drew him to the stony path. He sold all he had and gave it to the poor, and became a Franciscan tertiary first, and a friar subsequently. And if he never knew Francis and Clare personally he caught their spirit thoroughly, and the Lady Poverty never had a truer lover.

There are seventeen verses to the Chiara *lauda*, of which the first, second, fifth, ninth and sixteenth are given here in Italian and in a rough translation—



## A SANTA CHIARA

Argomento, Discorre e commenda la virtuosa Evangelica vita di Santa Chiara d'Assisi.

(1) O Vergin Clara luce,  
Che da la santa croce  
Avanti che sij nata,  
Fusti prenunciata  
A tua divota Madre,  
Che saresti a tue squadre alto splendore.

(2) Mostrasti clara luce  
Nella terra Asis-ana,  
Specchio e fontana d'aspra penitenza.  
Dopo Francesco duce  
A la gente Christiana  
In frutto e grana di gran patienza.  
Con istretta estinenza  
E ferma obediencia  
Il tuo corpo affligenda,  
Crocifigendo ogni tuo volontade  
Di lume divertade dai candore.

(5) Non volesti marito  
Del Mondo fraudolente,  
A Dio viventi li sei disposata ;  
Aveati il cor enfuto  
Di Christo omnipotente  
Francesco ardente, e'n castita fermata.  
Ti aveva sperse frata  
Fortementa enfiammata,  
Di darti a penitenza,  
E star ad obediencia e'n provertade,  
Servando castitade con amore.

(9) Tu Povertrate santa,  
Tue sore soccorresti,  
E non patesti aver necessitade ;  
Fрати e sore cinquanta  
D'un sol pane pascesti  
E l'olio desti di tua largitade.  
O Santa Castitade,  
Per cui asperitade  
Nulla gia ti era dura  
Domae la carne pura in astinenza  
Di penitenza non ti era dolore.

(16) O Vergin Clara stella,  
 De la superna curia  
 Haggi memoria di noi peccaturi.  
 E tu Agnese polzella  
 Obtien dal Re di gloria  
 Ch'aggram vittoria de tre osti duri.  
 Sentiam di quell' amore  
 Al qual pieno d'ardore  
 Francesco m'ha chiamati,  
 E invitati a la nozze dell' Agnello  
 Che a gustae quello Sani ogni languore.

O Virgin, dearest light,  
 Of whom from Holy Cross  
 Before thy day of birth  
 It wast divinely told  
 To thy devoted inother,  
 That thou shouldst shine abroad a guiding star.

Thy light shone clear around  
 Thy town of sweet Assisi,  
 Fountain and mirror thou, of sharpest penitence.  
 After Francis leader  
 Of the Christian peoples,  
 The fruit to reap from seed of sufferance.  
 With abstinence most rigid,  
 And with obedience steadfast,  
 Afflicting thus thy body,  
 Desires crucifying,  
 Thy truth was yet thy joyance.

No husband would you have  
 From this deceitful world,  
 The living God thine only Spouse.  
 In thy heart reigned supreme  
 The Christ omnipotent ;  
 And Francis, thy dear brother, with chastity inflamed thee.  
 And oft did he incite thee,  
 To bitter ruth to pledge thee,  
 And steadfast in obedience  
 And strict in poverty  
 To be the lowly servant of love and chastity.

Thou poor one ever saintly,  
 Thou succouredst thy sisters,  
 And to have need thou wouldst not suffer them

Brothers and sisters fifty  
 With one small loaf thou feedest,  
 And of sufficient oil thou gavest them.  
 O chastity most holy,  
 Who sufferedst all hardship,  
 And found the rough way smooth.  
 Thy body was made pure by abstinence,  
 And naught was pain to thee in penitence.

O clear and radiant star,  
 Look down on us from heaven.  
 We sinners need thy prayers.  
 And thou sweet maiden Agnes  
 Obtain from King of Glory  
 Our victory o'er our foes :  
 May us that love illumine  
 Which Francis full of fervour  
 Inspired in his poor friars.  
 Invite us to the feast-day of the Lamb,  
 And we shall eat, and hunger never more.

'Tis but a poor translation ! but we have not the wondrous Franciscan pen of Anne Macdonnell, from whose *Sons of Francis* we take the following—

"Hear, sweetest Poverty,  
 All our love is due to thee.  
 Little Poverty, tender thing,  
 Humility's own sisterling,  
 For eating and drinking and everything  
 One bowl contenteth thee.  
 At her table she eats of the best,  
 Bread and water and herbs with zest.  
 If there comes from without a guest,  
 A pinch of salt adds she.  
 Poverty, thou wisdom deep,  
 Holding all possession cheap,  
 Thy will that thou fast bound dost keep  
 Springs up in liberty. . . ."

And in another song to Poverty Jacopone cries—

"Povertate e nulla havere  
 Et nulla cosa poi volere  
 Et omne cosa possidere  
 En Spirito de libertate."

Just one last quotation—

“God does not lodge in narrow heart ;  
Love claims the whole and spurns the part.  
Greathearted one, where'er thou art,  
Thou shelterest Deity ! ”

The Mystical Marriage of St. Francis with Madonna Poverty is a favourite theme of many of the early Franciscans, and Dante gives it eternal shape in Canto XI of the *Paradiso*—

“She reft of her first husband, scorned, obscure,  
One thousand and a hundred years and more,  
Waited without a suitor till he came.  
Naught it availed that she was found secure,  
With that Amyclas when the voice was heard,  
Which made the world with terror-pangs endure.  
Naught it availed that she nor shrank nor feared ;  
So that, when Mary still remained below,  
She mounted up with Christ upon the Cross !  
But lest I tell it too obscurely so,  
By these two lovers, in my speech diffuse,  
Thou Poverty and Francis now may'st know.”

“O wealth unknown ! O veritable good ! ”

exclaims Dante further on in the canto—and in the *Convito* he quotes Lucan's story of Amyclas the fisherman, who was found lying on a bed of seaweed by Cæsar, secure in his poverty, and unmoved by the revolutions of the times : “And therefore the wise man says that the traveller, empty-handed, on his way would sing in the very presence of robbers. And that is what Lucan refers to in his fifth book when he commends the security of poverty, saying : ‘O safe condition of poverty ! O narrow habitations and hovels ! O riches of the Gods not yet understood ! At what times and at what walls could it happen, the not being afraid of any noise, when the hand of Cæsar was knocking ? ’ And this, says Lucan, when he describes how Cæsar came by night to the hut of the fisherman Amyclas, to pass the Adrian Sea.”

It is to Dante we owe one of the most beautiful pictures



of a Poor Clare—that of Piccarda Donati, in Canto III of the *Paradiso*. Poor Piccarda was torn by force from her convent and given in marriage to Rossellino della Corso. After the marriage ceremony she threw herself, in an agony of grief and prayer, at the feet of the crucifix. Her prayer was heard—her body became covered in leprosy, and the marriage was never consummated. The whole canto is very beautiful, and the brief account of St. Clare, beginning “A faultless life,” must be noted. In this canto also occurs the perfect line—

“In la sua volontade e nostra pace.”

—“In his will is our peace.”

The following translation is by A. E. Nellen—

“Straight to the Shadow, which for converse seem'd  
Most eager, I address'd me : and began  
As one whom too great longing doth confound.  
'O Spirit born for joy ! who in the rays  
Of life eternal dost that sweetness feel  
Which he who tastes not ne'er can fully know ;  
Grateful 'twill be to me wouldst thou content  
Me with thy name and with thy destiny.'  
'Our charity doth no more bar the gate  
To a just wish than doth that love above  
Which would have all its court like to itself.  
I was a virgin sister in the world  
And if thy memory be rightly searched,  
My greater beauty will not hide me from thee,  
But thou shalt recognize, I am Piccarda,  
Who, placed here with the other blessed ones,  
Am blessed in sphere that moves most tardily.  
All our affections that alone do burn  
In the joy perfect of the Spirit blest,  
Rejoice, as each his order's mark doth bear.  
And this condition, which appears so low,  
Is therefore given us because our vows  
Have been neglected and in some part void.'  
Whence I to her replied : 'Something divine  
Shines in your countenance most wondrous fair  
Transfiguring thee from what I recollect,  
And therefore my remembrance was so slow.  
But what thou tellest me now aids me so  
That to retrace thy form is easier.

But tell me, ye whose blessedness is here,  
 Do ye desire to gain a loftier place,  
 More to behold, and more in love to dwell ?'  
 She with those other spirits gently smiled ;  
 Thereafter answered me so full of joy,  
 She seemed to burn with the first flame of love.  
 ' Brother our will is quieted by power  
 Of charity, that makes us wish alone  
 For what we have, nor gives us thirst for more.  
 If we desired to pass on higher still  
 Our aspirations would discordant be  
 Unto the will of Him who sets us here.  
 This thou wilt see in these spheres hath no place,  
 If love be still the one thing needful here,  
 And if her nature well thou contemplate.  
 Nay 'tis the essence of this blessed being  
 To hold ourselves within the will divine,  
 Whereby our own wills are themselves made one.  
 So our whole realm rejoiceth in the way  
 As doth the King whose will doth our wills away.  
 And His will is our peace. This is the sea  
 To which is moving onward whatso'er  
 It doth create, and all that nature makes.'  
 Full clearly then her words to me did prove  
 How everywhere in Heaven is Paradise,  
 Though not on all alike God's grace doth pour.

(Dante now asks how it was that Piccarda had broken her vow, and what had been the effects of that broken vow on her state in heaven)—

' A faultless life and merit high in heaven  
 A lady o'er us,' said she, ' by whose rule  
 Down in your world they clothe and veil themselves  
 That they may watch and sleep, till death they gain,  
 Beside that Spouse who every vow accepts  
 Which love to His good pleasure doth constrain.  
 To follow her, I from the world escaped,  
 While yet a girl, and in her habit clothed  
 To take her Order's path I vowed myself.  
 Thereafter men, more used to ill than good,  
 Tore me from out the cloister's sweet retreat.  
 God knows what afterward my life became !''

The following extract is taken from a rhymed life of St. Clare. It was written by a poetess of the fourteenth

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century, who probably was a nun of the Order, for she ends her poem with the Latin words : "Orate pro ancilla Dei quae composuit." The poem consists of 484 short lines, and is divided into stanzas. It is in the old Italian of the thirteenth century, which is half Latin, as in the canticles of St. Francis. The following are the first twelve lines of the poem—

"Cum core e voce chiara  
Cum mente innamorata  
Laudiamo sancta Chiara  
In cielo coronata.  
O luce resplendente,  
O stella matudina,  
O specchio relucente,  
O gemma celestina,  
Per volonta divina  
Del summo Patre eterno  
Nel utero materno  
Ben Chiara sei chiamata."

"With heart and cheerful voice  
With love let us rejoice,  
And praise the saintly Clare ;  
Crownèd is she in the skies  
Round her light eternal lies,  
Oh morning star so fair !  
Oh clearest of mirrors,  
Oh gem without errors,  
Clare, clear of all sin  
Clare named before birth,  
God declaring thy worth,  
Whilst the womb thou wast in."

There is a pretty rhymed ending in old French to a 1563 edition of Thomas of Celano's official legend of St. Clare. Here are a few lines of the French, and a translation of the whole—

"En ce petie et simple livre  
Par bon vouloir ay fait es cripre  
La vie pure et du tout clere  
De notre mere sainte Clere,  
Clere de non et bien plus d'œuvres  
Par quoy ces filles par bonnes œuvres !

D'un saint desire volonte pure  
 La merciront à toutes heures."

" In this small and simple book  
 With goodwill I have described  
 The pure and ever brilliant life  
 Of our Mother, Holy Clare,  
 Clear in name, in fame renowned.  
 For which her daughters by good works,  
 With pure desire and holy will,  
 Give thanks to her at every hour.  
 As for me, with right good heart  
 With all honour I'll her serve ;  
 From her bright name, Clare I'm called  
 But my surname is 'de Bruyères.'<sup>1</sup>  
 And the heather low and humble  
 Bears a flower full of charm,  
 And even in most arid soil,  
 In the heart of desert wastes  
 Full often doth it take its root.  
 Thus also should we take our root  
 In the cloister's holy desert,  
 That we the nourishment may gain  
 Which wins for us the Life Eternal—  
 For we all must die to live.  
 He that hath this book inscribed  
 Inscibeth it before his death.  
 You must believe it without scorn  
 That Francis ever yearns for death.  
 Brother Francis is he named  
 And his surname is du Puis.<sup>2</sup>  
 Ah those men and maids who read  
 The life of Holy Clare should hold  
 Of the writer some remembrance.  
 Also of me, your humble father,  
 And of my beloved Bruyères—  
 May God preserve them evermore  
 Without omitting or neglecting  
 All my little flock entire,  
 To whom at length may our God yield  
 In holy heaven, place and room ;  
 Such that beside you, Brother Claude,  
 Together may we praise our God  
 Upon that pleasant Hill of Sion.

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<sup>1</sup> A play on the word "heather." <sup>2</sup> A play on the word "death."



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In secula seculorum  
Puteus aquarum viventium  
Pray for the writer."

Then occurs the following note : "Pray for the venerable and virtuous religious named Sister Clare of Bruyères, abbess of the devout convent of the Lady St. Clare at Seurre, who has caused this present work to be written by Brother Francis Dupuis of the Order of Friars Minor."

From the souvenir of the silver jubilee of the Poor Clares of Indianapolis we cull the following two strophes—

"A week of centuries has flown  
Since Clare was born by God's decree  
To grace His Church, and there be known  
A peerless gem of sanctity.

Her youth was spent in wealthy bowers ;  
But cared she ought for fame or gold ?  
For higher things she plied her powers  
And pledged to Christ a love untold."

We must not forget St. Colette : she, too, has her little posies of verse ; the following is from the hymn for the vespers of St. Colette—

"Rise up, sweet Dove, from this foul earth,  
And on swift wing to Heaven take flight ;  
To where thy Jesus calleth thee  
In the bright realms and starry light.

Clad in a white and dazzling robe,  
Wearing a crown of lilies fair,  
Thou, ever following the Lamb,  
Wilt in the song of virgins share."

But the hymn of Matins pleases us better—

"Of virgins the glory and crown and support,  
Who of virginal Father and Mother wast born,  
O Christ, ever Virgin, our praises accept,  
This roseate morn.

Thou deignedst Thyself, in her yet tender years,  
Colette for Thy bride, a pure virgin to take ;  
She loves Thee, Thee only, and everything else  
Condemns for Thy sake.

That for Thee ever chaste she her body may keep,  
 She tortures with chainlets her delicate limbs,  
 And gladly spends nights without sleep, while she sues  
     Thee with suppliant hymns.

She follows in poverty Him who was poor ;  
 She joyfully gives up the riches of earth,  
 She seeks by retirement to re-live with the Saints,  
     In a heavenly birth."

In the office of St. Clare for the 12th of August there are some hymns, one of which is an abridged history of the Order. We quote the first two verses from *Petro Rodolphio, Hist. Seraph.*—

"Salve Christi sponsa, Clara,  
 Salve virgo Deo chara,  
 Salve Mater pauperum.

Tu mundi cuncta aspernata  
 Franciscum et imitata,  
 Per apostolicam normam."

The anthem of St. Clare is by Jacopone—

"Ave mater humilis,  
 Analla crucifixi,  
 Clara virgo nobilis,  
 Discipula Francisci.  
 Ad celestem gloriam  
 Fac nos proficisci. Amen."

Then there is the hymn for the lauds of St. Francis—rough and joyous and rhythmic, as it ought to be—

"O little flock of poor, rejoice !  
 Rich in your father's poverty,  
 With all your heart, with all your voice  
 Pour forth his praise unceasingly."

And the well-known Catholic hymn which begins—

"Blessed Francis, holy Father,  
 Now our hearts to thee we raise,  
 As we gather round thine altar,  
 Pouring forth our hymn of praise.  
 Bless thy children, holy Father,  
 Who thy mighty help implore,  
 For in heaven thou remainest,  
 Still the father of the poor."

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How it heartens one up in this greedy, grabbing age to hear the praises and pleasures of poverty thus sung!

Let us turn now to the New World, and learn how Bliss Carman from Canada's shores can echo the old Italian strain; we must not steal the whole of the *Word at St. Kevin's*, but here are a few choice verses—

“Thank God for Poverty  
That makes and keeps us free,  
That lets us go our unobtrusive way,  
Glad of the sun and rain,  
Upright, serene, humane,  
Contented with the fortune of a day.

For I would shun no task  
That kindness may ask,  
Nor flinch at any duty to my kind;  
Praying but to be freed  
From ignorance and greed,  
Grey fear, and dull despondency of mind.

And I would keep my soul  
Joyous and sane and whole,  
Unshamed by falsehood, and unvexed by strife  
Unalien in that clear  
That radiant atmosphere  
That still surrounds us in the larger life.

All selfish gain at best  
Brings but profound unrest,  
And inward loss, despite our loud professions.  
Think, therefore, what it is  
What surety of bliss  
To be absolved from burdensome possessions.”

Canon Rawnsley, amongst Anglicans, has best felt the Franciscan call, and he shows it in *On the Way to Rivo Torto*—

“Then through the elms I heard a little bell,  
Not that great thunderer—St. Francesco's pride,  
Nor the deep bell beneath the purple dome,  
That marks and mocks the ‘Little Portion's’ home,  
A bell that speaks as if an angel cried,  
The bell that rings where Clara used to dwell.

And as it rings, beside a rose in flower,  
 The sweet wild rose that touches every heart,  
 I see a grey monk kneeling in the way ;  
 He prays, and knows St. Clara too will pray,  
 Then rises blest, and never more apart,  
 Walks with her soul towards heaven in peace and power.

The dream has vanished, but in all the plain  
 Henceforth there is no path so dedicate  
 To love as this, where moving up and down  
 To beg for alms in old Assisi's town  
 Called by the bell above St. Damien's gate,  
 St. Francis quite forgot his life-long pain.

And still each time with blessing in the air  
 For those who pass down Rivo Torto's way  
 The tinkling bell of Damien's church may sound,  
 There on his knees St. Francis will be found  
 As happy as a lover, sworn to pray  
 And work with one God gave him, Sister Clara."

It is not to the Poor Clare that one needs to praise poverty—she knows. But one would like very seriously to ask the general reader how much peace he or she finds in the present idolatry of the superfluous? For it is the great mass of people who suffer to-day from owning things.

The late William James, Professor of Philosophy at Harvard, put this matter very straightly, and where the preacher is unheeded the philosopher may sometimes make himself heard: "Among us English-speaking peoples especially do the praises of poverty need once more to be boldly sung. We have grown literally afraid to be poor. We despise any one who elects to be poor in order to simplify and save his inner life. If he does not join in the general scramble, and pant with the money-making street, we deem him spiritless and lacking in ambition. We have lost the power even of imagining what the ancient idealization of poverty could have meant. The liberation from material attachments, the unbridled soul, the manlier indifference, the paying our way by what we are or do, and not by what we have, the right



to fling away our life at any moment irresponsibly, the more athletic trim, in short, the moral fighting shape.

"I recommend this matter to your serious pondering, for it is certain that the prevalent fear of poverty among the educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE DEATH OF THE POOR CLARE

WE had been lunching in one of the Franciscan convents at Assisi which had been a school, but to which, alas! but few scholars now come. At the end of the simple meal the "Presidente" came in to greet us, and insisted on changing our plates and offering the last dish with her own hands. Then she wished to show us the chapel. We went upstairs along the cool stone passages and through an open door into a plain little chapel—but with a large west window, from floor to ceiling, thrown open to a most wonderful view over the Umbrian plain. A cheerful nun looked up from her prayer-book and smiled at us, and chatted awhile about the chapel. "And now I must go on with my prayers for the sister who is dead," she said, and she nodded towards a notice-board just within the door. I went and looked, and there was a brief black-edged notice requesting prayers for the soul of a Poor Clare, for sixty-two years in religion, who had died that morning. The notice did not give the name in the world—nor the years in the world. All that mattered was those sixty-two years of prayer—those sixty-two years of seclusion and fasting and penance. The next morning I slipped along to Santa Chiara, and there in the cold bare church was the catafalque, with some peasants and priests watching. I suppose the sisters were somewhere behind a grating whence they could take a last farewell of that one of their number who was leaving the cloister after sixty-two years. Of old the nuns were always buried within the convent grounds, but that is now forbidden in most Italian cities—all burials must be without the walls. Some of the many confraternities of Franciscans gathered

shortly, many of them in quaint brown garb and carrying banners. Then, with mournful singing of Litanies and the *Dies Iræ*, the procession passed through the town, out of the Porta St. Giacomo to the new cemetery where the nuns have a corner of their own. Alone in life! Alone in death! The custody of the eyes now fast sealed, and no vision of those lovely hills and valleys beneath the cemetery, or of those quaint streets through which we passed. And men—all men—to sing and pray, and follow that strange funeral of an enclosed nun.

Another memory comes to us of the funeral of a Poor Clare at Alassio—but there children in white veils were following.

Death often comes late to a Poor Clare: the hardships only seem to harden and strengthen once the first few years are passed. We find the following cases of longevity in their annals—

Sister Innocent of Todi, entered the reformed convent at Foligno when she was already old, and died there in 1476, aged one hundred and five years, with a reputation for sanctity.

Sister Claude Ravenez of St. Claude died on Good Friday 1638, aged ninety-six years (Poligny annals).

Sister Jeanne, widow, of Lerena in Spain, entered when fifty, and died a nonagenarian in 1496. She is noted for her austerities.

Mother Mary Joseph, last abbess of Seurre, died on the 25th of August, 1856, aged ninety-eight—she also had a great reputation for virtue and sanctity.

Sister Constance Parpendet, who during the Revolution preserved the relics of St. Colette, died in 1847, aged eighty-nine years.

Mother Winifred Giffard, abbess of the English Clares at Rouen, died in 1706, aged ninety years.

The first abbess of Lyons died at the age of one hundred and seven, and two other abbesses reached the ages of eighty-six and eighty-eight.

Nor does exile—from country or even from cloister—keep the aged Clare from making a good death. In 1558 the Turks took the island of Minorca and burnt the convent of Poor Clares. They carried off Sister Catherine Ponce prisoner to Constantinople. Here this nun, who was apparently of English birth, calmly kept the rule as far as possible—fasting always, repeating the office, going barefoot. She was soon set at liberty, and secretly she taught such small children as she could get hold of the elements of the Christian religion. She died in 1634 at the age of seventy.

Of one of the Gravelines nuns—a fugitive from England, and subsequently expelled from Holland—it is recorded that she died at the age of seventy, and that for the last twenty years of her troubled life she was quite blind, but she was always recollected and content, and passed cheerfully to Paradise.

The Poor Clares carefully record that it is those who have practised the most extreme abstinence whose names appear in these records. *Mère Marie de l'Immaculée Conception*, for instance, who reached the age of eighty-six, never departed from the strict fast, even when, in 1793, she had to fly to Germany during the French Revolution. In fact, she was more strict than the rule; she never partook of the evening collation, but lived always on the one meal a day.

There is a story told of one of the nuns of the Annunciation of Agen who, the doctors said, would certainly die if she did not break the rule to go to certain baths, etc., and would as certainly live if dispensed from the rule. The case was put before the General of the Order.

"Moriatur," was the swift and brief decision.

But the doctors were not always true prophets as to the illness of the Poor Clares: *Mère Bonne de Paris*, one of the three foundresses of Marseilles, was told by three doctors she must soon die unless she submitted to their treatment and dietary: she refused, and revelation was



granted her that seven days without food would cure her : she fasted and lived—to the very fair age of sixty-six. A similar story is told of Mother Colette of St. Francis, who died in the odour of sanctity in 1692. Shortly after she took the habit the doctors said she must partake of meat soups or die ; she preferred to risk her life to breaking the rule. She was cured and lived long. "The same thing has happened to many Poor Clares," calmly record their annals. Indeed, we cannot but remember the same thing happening to a noted playwright in our day ; a convinced vegetarian, he was supposed to have tubercular disease of the bones of the foot, and was ordered beef-tea and meat diet. "If it is to be a question as to whether I am to die, or the animals are to die for me to feed on them, I accept death," said Shaw. And then, in his usual paradoxical way, proceeded to live.

From the few Poor Clares of great age we have had the privilege of speaking to, the most striking fact has been the clearness of mind ; one cannot help thinking that the simple and scanty diet leaves these saints in good trim, not only physically, but mentally and spiritually, and aids them to pierce the veil that clouds the senses of those who live in the turmoil and luxury of the world.

Nothing seems able to dim the joys of death to a Poor Clare. In *Les Foules de Lourdes* Huysmans writes of his visit to the Clarisses there : "They told me last year of one of these saints afflicted with such a swelling that she resembled a fire-balloon rather than a woman ; she was in such a terrible state she could not rest either sitting or lying. It was not dropsy—I don't know what it was—but she died radiant, and envied by all her companions."

Some of the Latin phrases in the old chronicles of the convents which tell of the coming of death are very beautiful. "Ad sponsum evolavit die 4 Decembris anno 1598 " is recorded of Sister Virginia of Norcia ; and "Ad astra migravit die 19 Maii, 1659," of Sister Mary-Antony of the same town.

It will be remembered that within the last few years the sudden death of a Poor Clare at Notting Hill necessitated an inquest, and that it then came out that the doctor who attended the nuns was a Protestant, and was quite satisfied with the attention and care given to his patients. It was necessary for two of the sisters to attend before the coroner on this occasion, and they did so. These points need insisting on, for some Protestants seem to think that the laws of the land are ignored in convents : so far as registrations of death, etc., are concerned, of course the nuns must fulfil, and do fulfil, the law.

And if death cannot come too late, neither can it come too early, for a Poor Clare ; it is ever welcome, this opening of the door to Paradise. In the *Life of Cardinal Vaughan* by Snead-Cox we have a wonderful picture of the death of his sister, Clare Vaughan, at Amiens in 1862, when she was nineteen years old and had only been a novice for nine months. She was carried into the church, where Herbert Vaughan saw her, though she herself kept her eyes fixed on the Blessed Sacrament. Next day he went to her cell and gave her Communion. He writes to their father : " She is immensely happy ; nothing could exceed her joy." She herself writes to her uncle : " I have *glorious news* to tell you—that I may hope in a few days to see my Celestial Spouse in heaven, and to gaze on that face the beauty of which no words can tell. . . . The doctor says that not only my chest, but everything in my body is attacked . . . it is unspeakable happiness."

The story of the very end is told by the nuns who surrounded this "blessed child," as they call her.

The abbess said to her : " Courage, my child, courage ! Death is near, and the crown will soon follow."

"It is very easy," she replied with sweet, innocent gaiety, "to say ' Courage, Clare, courage,' when one only sees Paradise through a little hole !"—and she held up her hand, half closed, letting only a little circle of light show through it.

It reminds one of Fuller's phrase about St. Monica : "Drawing near her death, her soul saw a glimpse of happiness through the cracks of her sickness-broken body."

Clare Vaughan said later on : "When I get to Paradise I shall be wild with joy. I shall throw myself into the arms of the Blessed Virgin, and when the angels look astonished I shall say, 'Oh, if you had lived on earth an exile and suffered in a mortal body as I have, you would be transported with joy as I am, since that body, which separated me from my Beloved, has fallen to pieces.'"

She died on the 20th of January. Amongst the letters left by her was found the following—

"O Jesus, my sweet, my only love ! hear the prayer of a most unworthy sinner, your little child, your betrothed, your spouse. By your loving heart, by your sacrament of love, allow my chest to be *soon* attacked, that I may die, that I may go to you, my only love, my *dear, dear* Master, my Beloved. I am infinitely unworthy that you should hear me, a miserable sinner. But I trust in your *immense love* and in your mercy. I know, O Jesus, that I shall not be confounded. O Jesus, increase my faith. My only and sweet Love, bless me, and have mercy on your devoted and most unworthy spouse,

"Sister of the Infant Jesus,

"Victim of the most Holy Sacrament."

God grant to us to live as cheerfully and die as gladly as a Poor Clare.

## APPENDIX

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

- 1170. Thomas à Becket murdered.
- 1194. St. Clare born. Richard Cœur de Lion is a prisoner of Saladin.
- 1198. Innocent III, Pope.
- 1212. Clare takes vows ; is joined by her sister Agnes.
- 1215. Community granted title of "Poor Ladies." Magna Charta signed.
- 1219. Agnes goes to Florence as abbess.
- 1224. Cardinal Ugolino drafts rule and gets it sanctioned. Stigmata of St. Francis.
- 1226. Death of St. Francis. St. Louis ascends the throne of France.
- 1227. Gregory IX, Pope.
- 1228. Canonization of St. Francis.
- 1230. Clare confounds Saracens.
- 1236. Agnes of Bohemia takes the veil.
- 1253. Death of St. Clare (there were seventy convents in existence in different parts of Europe).
- 1255. Canonization of St. Clare. Isabelle of France founds Longchamps.
- 1265. Dante born. Bonaventura modifies rule and allows possessions.
- 1270. Giotto born.
- 1293. Clares established at Minories, London.
- 1384. There were 404 convents, of which 251 were in Italy. There were about 15,000 Clares.
- 1404. Bernardino of Sienna begins his reforms.
- 1406. St. Colette begins her reforms.
- 1413. St. Catherine of Bologna born.
- 1492. Louise of Savoy takes the veil at Orbe.
- 1517. Leo X unites Franciscan reforms.
- 1521. Luther at the Diet of Worms.
- 1538. Dissolution of the monasteries in England.



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- 1649. Charles I beheaded.
- 1700. Poor Clares of Geneva expelled.
- 1727. St. Veronica Guiliiani died.
- 1739. French Revolution.
- 1818. Discovery of Francis's shrine.
- 1850. Clare-Colettines come to Baddesley, England.  
Discovery of St. Clare's shrine.
- 1872. Translation of St. Clare's body to crypt.
- 1877. Poor Clares established in the United States.
- 1906. Publication of *Histoire Abrégée de l'Ordre de Sainte Claire* at Lyons.
- 1907. There were 518 convents of Clares in different parts of the world; number of Clares about 10,000.

### TESTAMENT OF ST. CLARE.

I. Among the many graces we have received, and continue to receive, from our Lord, the Father of Mercies, there is one before all others for which we should show Him our gratitude : and this is the grace of our vocation. For, inasmuch as it is the most perfect, so much the more does it claim our gratitude. We should remember always the words of St. Paul to the first Christians : "Know thy vocation." The Son of God has called us to Himself, and the acts and words of the blessed St. Francis, His true lover and follower, have brought us to this day by the narrowest path. Let us therefore, dear sisters, not forget the benefits the Lord has granted to us, and especially this grace of vocation which He has deigned to share with us through His great servant the blessed Francis. Soon after his conversion, when he as yet had neither companions nor sisters, he was repairing the church of St. Damian, and, becoming possessed by the Holy Spirit, he foretold to the poor men dwelling near all that has come to pass. Speaking to them in the French tongue, he said : "Come here, brothers ; help me in building this convent of St. Damian, for here will dwell some ladies, through whose piety our Heavenly Father will be glorified throughout all His holy Church."

II. And our blessed father predicted this not only of ourselves, but of all who by their holy lives should become

sharers of our lot. So, my sisters, with what fervour, with what faith and perseverance, should we keep the commandments of God and the rules of our holy founder, that we may appear before our Judge on the last day with the talents entrusted to us multiplied! We have been chosen by Him to be the example and mirror of the faithful and of those sisters who will be called to our vocation, that they also in their turn may be a holy example of virtuous life. Wherefore for these mercies we are doubly bound to bless the Lord, to praise Him, and to follow Him in all things, asking His divine assistance in all things.

III. Not long after the conversion of the most blessed Francis I, with a few companions, promised voluntary obedience by His most precious grace manifested to me. Then our blessed Father Francis gave thanks to the Lord, and, being moved with compassion for me and my sisters, knowing well we were weak and yet we had not refused to endure poverty and humiliations, promised to us his care and protection, together with that of his religious. Thus by the will of the most high God and of our blessed Francis we came to dwell in the monastery of St. Damian, and there our Lord deigned to increase His grace, so that the profession of His servant should take place.

IV. About this time the blessed Francis gave us in writing our rule of life, which especially exhorts us to perseverance in holy poverty. He not only helped us in this by his own example and instructions, but left us, beside the rule, many written precepts relative thereto, so that after his death it should be difficult for us to leave the path he had marked out for us. And we have faithfully kept our promises, following in the steps of the Son of God and of our blessed Father St. Francis, who chose for his inheritance renunciation of all earthly possessions.

V. I, Clare, unworthy servant of Jesus Christ and of the Poor Servants of St. Damian, have twice voluntarily bound myself to the observance of the holy Lady Poverty, so that after my death the sisters may not on any pretence depart from it. And to make sure our profession should not be altered I procured its confirmation by our holy father, Pope Innocent III, under whose pontificate our Order began.

VI. I recommend my sisters, present and future, to the

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successor of the Blessed Francis, our father and founder, and to all his religious, that they may help us to serve God in holy poverty by their example and instructions, and I pray them in deepest humility to see that, frail plants as we are, we may never swerve from our sacred purpose. If it should happen any sisters leave this monastery to go elsewhere, I fervently desire they should keep this rule in all strictness and integrity.

VII. Also I exhort all my sisters, in the name of Jesus Christ, to walk continually in the path of holy simplicity, humility and poverty, and in holy intercourse to observe a discretion such as our blessed St. Francis always taught us. Only by means of these virtues, through the mercy of Him who has chosen us for this great destiny, can we spread abroad the odour of a good reputation. Love one another in Jesus Christ, and make this love show itself outwardly in good works; thus the sisters, incited by your example, will grow in love to God and their neighbour. I pray also for her who has to govern others, that she may so raise herself above them more by modesty and virtues than by the dignity of office, causing thus her sisters to obey her more through love than through duty. Let her also have the tenderness and watchfulness over her spiritual daughters that a good mother has over her own children; let her be humble, kindly and accessible in manner to them, so that they may not fear at all times to open their hearts to her on all occasions. And the sisters should remember that for the love of God they have renounced their own will and have promised willingly and unreservedly obedience to their mother, so that she, finding love, humility and concord among you, may feel the burden of her charge lightened and made less troublesome.

VIII. Let us take care, O my sisters, that after having embraced the life of strictness and holy living we may not depart from it through carelessness or ignorance, in so doing causing harm to our Lord, and to our blessed St. Francis, and to the Holy Church, whose eyes are fixed on our conduct. It is written: "Accursed are those who abandon Thy commandments," wherefore, kneeling humbly, I pray our Lord to grant us the grace of final perseverance, through the merits of the Holy Mother, and of the blessed St. Francis, and of all the saints. Amen.

IX. O dearly loved sisters, present and future, I leave



these things in writing that they may be better remembered by each of you, in token of the blessing of the Lord and of our most blessed Father St. Francis. I remain your mother and your servant.

(The authenticity of the Testament and of the following Blessing have both been questioned, but they seem to us to ring true. The prayers to the "Five Wounds" we have omitted, as the authorship is certainly very questionable.)

#### THE BLESSING OF ST. CLARE.

In the name of the most Holy Trinity. Amen. May the Omnipotent God bless you, dear sisters, may He make His countenance to shine upon you, and have pity on you; may He give you His peace.

And not only you who may be present at my death, but also all those absent; also every one who after you shall enter my Order, and shall persevere unto the end in her vocation—be it in this convent, or any other of the same profession. I therefore, Clare, useless servant of Jesus Christ, unworthy plantlet of our Father St. Francis; I, your sister and mother, pray the Lord God for His most loving compassion, and by the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, His mother, and the Archangel Michael, and our guardian angels, and our Seraphic Father, that He may grant you His blessing, and thus confirm from heaven that which I leave you in His name. May He deign to pour out on you here on earth the abundance of His grace, to call you to heaven, admitting you to the choir of the saints who enjoy the Beatific Vision.

I give you my blessing at present while alive, and confirm it after my death. I leave you all the benedictions that I can, and I implore them for you from that God who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

#### MAXIMS OF ST. CLARE.

We give here briefly some of Clare's favourite maxims which she followed in the governing of her nuns—

She who enters the cloister must forget the world, and speak no more of it, and she will be free from many dangers.



He alone who is deaf to the noise of the age can ascend as far as the secrets of the great King Jesus Christ.

Whoever does not forget relations, friends and country does not love Christ truly. Jesus will be the only one, and one cannot serve two masters.

The life and passion of Jesus Christ, which we should imitate, is the book of the religious person.

Melancholy is poison to devotion : it dries up the veins of the spirit, it takes away its internal heat, destroys its strength, and renders it incapable of religious exercises.

Melancholy is good only when with tears, a contrite heart and humility ; one does penance for one's sins.

Tears are not always signs of true repentance ; they can be also signs of desperation, and in this case they are only daughters of self-love.

When one is in tribulation it is necessary to be more happy and more gay, because one is then nearer to God.

Sorrows and sufferings are nothing in comparison to the glory which awaits us in recompense.

Riches are a weight which always draws down the soul, being the fount of many ills ; poverty is the real good.

Original purity is such a precious gem that one can never labour too much to preserve it.

Ah ! how many temptations are born from idle discourses ; bridle, therefore, the tongue.

Silence is for the nuns almost a shield which renders them impenetrable to many external assaults.

A nun, far from using superfluous words, should hardly use those necessary.

The mouth of a nun always ready to chatter is like a house the door of which is open to the thieves who want to devastate it.

Penance and fasting are necessary to subjugate the flesh ; thus alone the spirit acquires liberty, and is capable of great flights.

The attention of a superior should be turned more to the young than to the old, because young plants have the greater need of culture.

When one recites the Divine Office, then one is in the company of the angels, and one speaks with God ; banish, therefore, every other thought.

Do not let murmuring be heard among you, O daughters, and far from you be stinging and biting words ;

true charity bears with the defects of others, and even excuses them and hides them.

Where charity is, is peace ; where peace is, is God.  
(Loccatelli.)

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